

**E. D. MOREL**

**THE MAN AND HIS WORK**

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**F. SEYMOUR COCKS**

This book gives a detailed description of one of the most praised and most abused men of recent years. The work deals with Morel's earlier years and shows how his views on Free Trade and Native Rights in Africa were formed. It gives the first detailed account of the Congo Reform Movement and of the great campaign which lifted the yoke of slavery from millions of Natives in tropical Africa; and also describes Morel's fight against Secret Diplomacy and Militarism, and his attitude towards the recent war.

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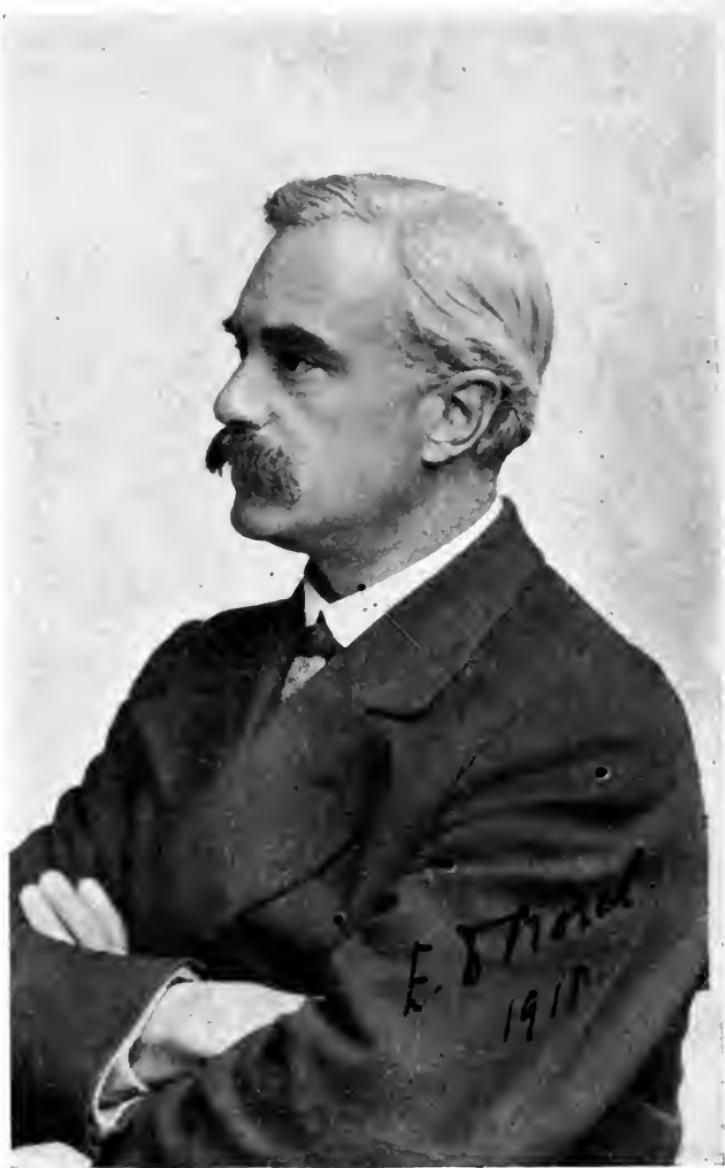
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February 1921



# **E. D. MOREL**

**THE MAN AND HIS WORK**



E. D. MOREL, 1918.

# E. D. MOREL

THE MAN AND HIS WORK

BY

F. SEYMOUR COCKS

Author of "The Secret Treaties"

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

COLONEL WEDGWOOD, D.S.O., M.P.



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*"There is all Africa and her prodigies in us."*  
SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

## INTRODUCTION

BY COLONEL WEDGWOOD, D.S.O., M.P.

A not inconsiderable part of this volume is taken up with appreciations of the work of E. D. Morel, laudatory appreciations coming from the heads of Church and State and Commerce. They read curiously. Those who made them think otherwise, now. The story of E. D. Morel is like a play by one of the great Greek Tragedians, and can only be fully brought out by the dramatic contrasts. In 1911 the *Morning Post* hardly got ahead of a press and public pouring forth peans of praise ; and within a few short years even his friends were glad to see Morel safe in gaol, lest press and public should assassinate him !

The man himself never changed at all, neither his ideals, nor his weapons, nor his enthusiasms, nor his almost childlike faith in human nature. He is left at the end a little puzzled and bewildered at the four prison walls he found confining him. As he never knew of any reason why truth and logic should not prevail in his own case (for he never could "play the hypocrite amongst you"), so he supposed that truth and logic should be enough for all men always. It was on this supposition that he had carried to a successful close the emancipation of the Congo, perhaps the greatest single-handed fight that any man has ever won. And then with the same sword he went up against Armageddon, and the marvel

## INTRODUCTION

is that the man is still alive. Perhaps this faith came from underestimating the vested interests in the world or from ignorance of psychology. Or perhaps there was a grain of truth in the Address from the African Chiefs. Morel is in some ways very like a little child ; and like all little children he may have come "from God."

As the Africans have had presumably no reason to suppose that Morel is paid by German gold (for they do not know one exploiter from another), and as on simple matters like liberty they may not have had their minds changed by the war, their Address of thanks may stand.

A fight against your own people for aliens, not even of the same race, . . . at the risk of losing the goodwill of your own brethren, is humanly speaking unnatural. Hence we take it to be from God. And we class you among the few whom He has at all times reserved for Himself to carry out His purpose and maintain His honour among the nations of the world.

E. D. Morel is not a saint. It is true that he does not take life lightly or relax with ease. He sets a hard, a very hard pace, in racing towards the stars. But he does not wear his hair long, nor go bare-footed in Tolstoyan smock. What people think of him matters. He does like recognition, and his hard work is partly to deserve that recognition. It did not please him to be sent to prison "for the Cause." His smile is somewhat sour when he is turned down by an Archbishop. This goes to show that E. D. Morel is not all saint, nor all fanatic. It indicates that the child may grow into a man, in practical politics,—and a very formidable man it will be. No one ever ridiculed Morel.

Few know the capacity of this man. When he touches a subject he masters it, till there is nothing more to be said. He knows how to get it into the press in the most

palatable form. On his own subjects I class him with Mr. Lloyd George or Mr. Devlin or Mr. Philip Snowden, as a superb platform orator. And withal he has the basic ideas of Liberty that move the spirit of England. One day he discovered that to take their land from the native cultivators was to enslave them, to establish exploitation ; and in that sign he conquered, and swept away the horrors of the Congo. A clerk in a Liverpool shipping office, without money or connections, by sheer force of character and ability, rose to the eminence of a Wilberforee, and did his work in shorter time. Some day he will discover that the age-long process of taking their land from Englishmen has had the same results, and then there will be more trouble, for others beside himself.

The first phase in the life of Morel came to an end in 1911 and left him victorious, without a rival, without an enemy who dared show his teeth. The second phase is ending now. He turned his attention to Diplomacy, showed it up, exposed the ignorance and arid priestcraft of it, and held to the exposure through the war, that apotheosis of diplomacy. It has left him against the ropes, bloody, execrated, but not knocked out. The third phase is still to come ; but it will be well to consider more closely Morel in war, and the ferocious hatred to which he gave rise in the governing and middle classes ;<sup>1</sup> for the second phase must be understood.

Our foreign policy is conducted by a few governing personages, not necessarily by the Cabinet, still less by the sentiments of the governing Party. The powerful ones, ensconced in the Foreign Office, use or cast out such instruments as passing gusts of Party send to be their

<sup>1</sup> He was never refused a hearing by a working-class audience. That class seems to have a monopoly both of patience and toleration.

## INTRODUCTION

nominal chiefs. Sir Edward Grey suited them. Morel discovered this; and he did not like their foreign policy. No man was ever more intent on hunting down what he did not like than Morel. War made no difference to him. It merely proved the more completely to his satisfaction that Grey and the policy were wrong. Everybody else might say that it was a war made in Germany. Morel knew better. It was Grey and the arch-priests of the Foreign Office using Grey who had helped; it must be so. We all like to make our theories fit, and no man can ladle out blacking quite impartially.

But in a war, the safety of the State makes it quite vital that everyone should believe that the other side is the aggressor. In no other way can the *morale* of a nation be stiffened through the horrors of war. The Government that fails to convince its people of this is destroyed, and revolution supervenes. Morel must have glimpsed this (though none of us saw it so clearly in 1914 as in 1919), and yet he went on adjusting the crime of the origin of the war. But Morel saw also, and far more clearly, that what he was doing was unpopular. He saw what he believed to be the truth. He said to himself, "I must either be a coward and swim with the tide in silence or speak out. Ought a man to cease to speak the truth, because it is unpopular? No. Ought a man to cease to speak the truth, because it is dangerous—to himself? No. —to the State? (And here I think he thought a long time and finally again said :) No. Moreover what I am urging is really in the interest of the community, for a policy built on lies and shams must eventually be disastrous to the people."

Those of us who think, know full well that in ordinary times at least, the safety of the State does not come first in our rules of conduct. Justice comes first. We

know instinctively that we ought to do Justice though the heavens should fall ; we know that, in the long run, that which is unjust can never be expedient for the State. But ought we to tell a lie in the interests of the State ? Or live a lie by not telling the truth ? Many moralists will agree with Morel, that a man must just say what he thinks right, be the result to the State what it may. Otherwise we should have had no Christian Era, no Protestant Reformation, no representative or responsible government. The State would have remained stationary.

Are all these principles altered by war ? Most people think they are. Morel thought not. Does what you believe to be the truth, or your country's victory, come first ? If a man of Morel's standing and ability puts truth first, what are those who are responsible for the country's fate to do ? There was an E. D. Morel in Germany, Maximilian Harden. He too refused to suppress the truth. Does anyone doubt that he did contribute to the disillusionment of the Germans which brought about their revolution, their collapse ? Looking back now in calmer days, I think that both Morel was right, and those who locked him up were right, according to their lights. The excuse of the letter to Miss Sidgwick was indeed puerile and degrading, the use of Courts of Justice an hypocrisy ; but in war the herd instinct takes us all back to prehistoric man, when brute fear rules alone. If Christ had come preaching submission, we should have locked Him up too. War is the negation of Christianity and Justice.

But now the third phase opens. The war is done with, for a time. Morel is free. It is against war we must all fight. His old enemies, the old diplomacy, are spinning webs again, muddling again, pretending to construct a new world, really reconstructing the old. Kings,

## INTRODUCTION

Junkers, capitalists and serfs will soon be back at the bidding of the bad old International. Morel and all his colleagues, once called "liberal," are united in the ranks of the Independent Labour Party, the new International. It is a fight to the finish between these two.

## PREFACE

THIS book was finished on January 30, 1919. Certain difficulties have delayed its publication for a year. In the interval many things have happened. Peace has been signed, although not precisely the Peace to end War which we were promised. Europe has advanced a further stage towards bankruptcy. And warfare is still being waged in various parts of the world.

In the past twelve months, also, many eminent statesmen and commanders have written their reflections and "apologias," and a considerable quantity of new evidence bearing on the origin and conduct of the war has been published. In view of these facts I considered the question of adding a further chapter to this book. But after due reflection I decided that there was no need to alter a word of it. I have therefore left it as it was originally written.

A few years ago Morel endured much praise from eminent persons. Since 1914 he has endured much abuse from persons, eminent and otherwise. A few of those who abused him certainly knew what his views were, and detested them. But the majority of those to whom he was an object of obloquy never knew what his views were at all.

The object of this book is to set out, without adornment, the main facts of Morel's life and work. I believe that his views have been misrepresented and misjudged,

and I have tried to describe them impartially. Perhaps after reading this account some of his opponents may modify the views they have formed as to his conduct. In any event this book will give them the facts necessary for arriving at a sound judgment upon the matter—adverse or favourable as the case may be.

I take this opportunity of acknowledging my deep sense of gratitude to the many friends who have helped me with their advice. I thank Mr. Morel himself for allowing me to examine his books, correspondence and newspaper files. Without this permission this book could not have been written. I am indebted to Mr. Arthur Ponsonby for very kindly reading the manuscript, and for making several valuable suggestions, to Mr. Arthur F. Thorn for his assistance in correcting the proofs, and to Miss Ada Ammon for her invaluable and painstaking work in typing. I also thank Mrs. Huth Jackson, Mr. George Tweedy and Mr. Harrison Barrow for the valued help they have rendered in various ways, and Colonel Wedgwood for contributing the Introduction.

F. S. C.

*January 1920.*

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	3
PREFACE . . . . .	9

### *PART I*

#### THE FOUNDATIONS

CHAPTER		
I. WHO HE IS . . . . .		15
II. THE JOURNALIST . . . . .		23
III. THE WEST AFRICAN EXPERT . . . . .		34
IV. A CHAMPION OF NATIVE RIGHTS . . . . .		39
V. THE FREE TRADER . . . . .		50

### *PART II*

#### THE FIGHT AGAINST SLAVERY

VI. THE CONGO FREE STATE . . . . .		59
VII. FIRST SUSPICIONS . . . . .		65
VIII. CERTAINTY . . . . .		70
IX. THE CAMPAIGN OPENS . . . . .		78
X. TWO YEARS' HARD FIGHTING . . . . .		86
XI. THE CONGO REFORM ASSOCIATION . . . . .		99
XII. THE PEOPLE AND THE FOREIGN OFFICE . . . . .		119
XIII. THE FUTURE OF AFRICA . . . . .		136
XIV. VICTORY . . . . .		155

## CONTENTS

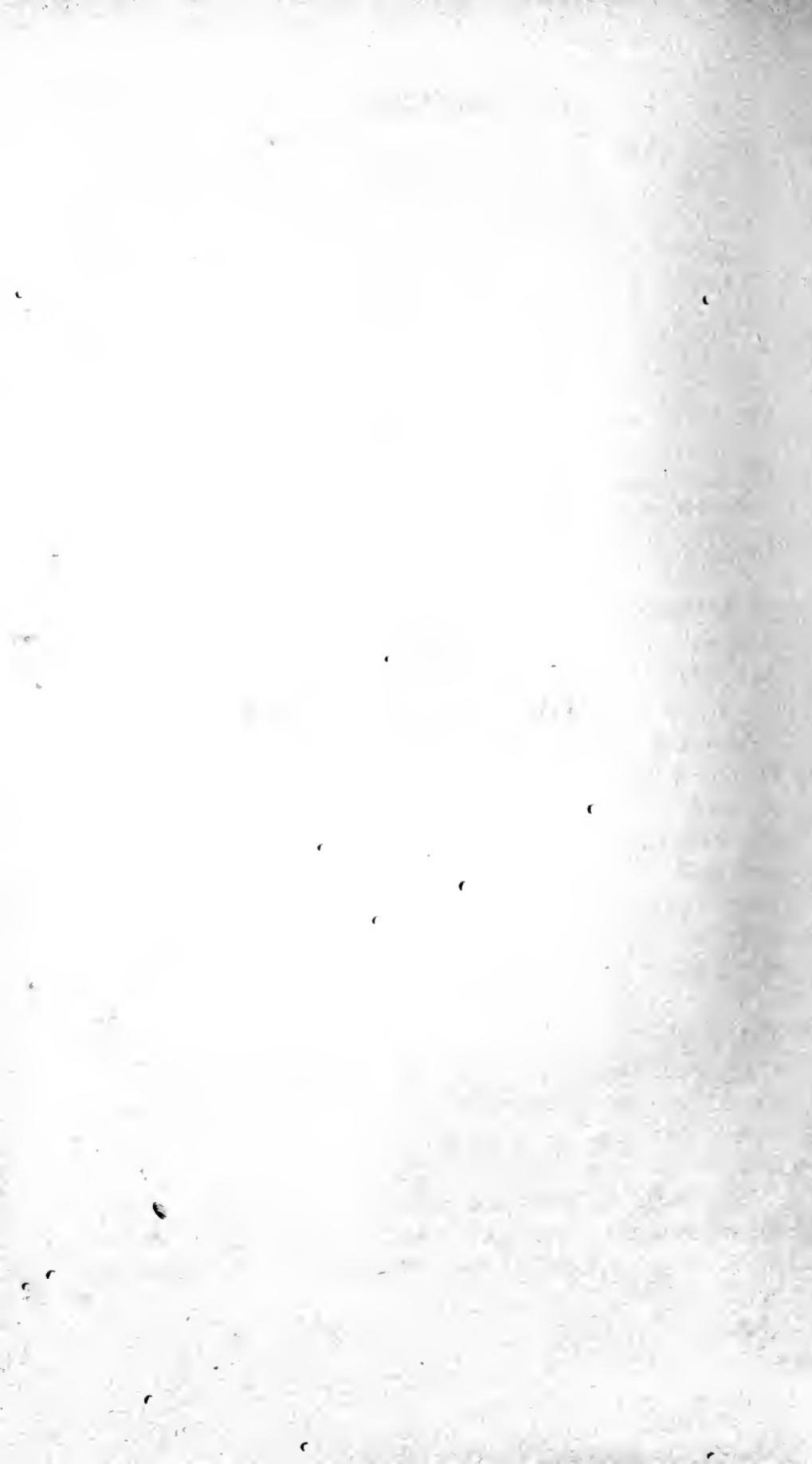
*PART III*

## THE FIGHT AGAINST WAR

CHAPTER	PAGE
XV. CO-OPERATION OR CONFLICT . . . . .	173
XVI. "MOROCCO IN DIPLOMACY" . . . . .	178
XVII. LIBERAL CANDIDATE FOR BIRKENHEAD . . . . .	200
XVIII. THE GATHERING STORM . . . . .	209
XIX. THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR . . . . .	218
XX. AN ENQUIRY INTO ORIGINS . . . . .	229
XXI. "TRUTH AND THE WAR" . . . . .	244
XXII. PENTONVILLE—AND AFTER . . . . .	254
<b>INDEX . . . . .</b>	<b>269</b>

*PART. I*

THE FOUNDATIONS



## CHAPTER I

### WHO HE IS

His father—His mother—Ancestral associations with the Quakers—A French household—Early affection for England—School-days at Eastbourne and Bedford—Love of nature—Secures business appointment at Liverpool.

E. D. MOREL, like Hilaire Belloc, is the offspring of a Franco-British alliance. His father was a Frenchman, his mother an Englishwoman, and in his own person he unites French fire, exactitude, acuteness and logical expression with British tenacity, stubbornness, impatience, courage, and scorn of consequences: altogether a most formidable combination of the characteristic qualities of the two races, and a fitting equipment for the man who baffled and defeated the policy of a king, and who aspires to help in overthrowing the giant evils of Militarism and Secret Diplomacy, which hold the modern world in thrall.

#### His Father.

Edmund Dene Morel, or, to give him his full baptismal name, Georges Edmond Morel-de-Ville, was born in Paris in a picturesque old mansion, since pulled down, in the Avenue D'Eylau, on July 10, 1873.

His father, Edmond Morel-de-Ville, was a man of considerable ability but little ambition. He spoke five or six languages, was a brilliant chess-player, and possessed

so fine a tenor voice that several tempting offers were made to him to sing at the famous Paris Opera. But he always declined these offers, not merely because he was unambitious, but also because he possessed to a marked degree that sense of the special duty owed by a son to his parents which is so familiar a feature of French social life, and which, although in many respects attractive, frequently, it must be confessed, has a tendency to cramp initiative and to limit development. In Morel-de-Ville's case the parent was a widowed mother, to whom he was devoted. It is true that his position in the Ministry of Finance was only a modest one, but at least it enabled him to live with his mother, to see her daily and to minister to her many wants. Had he thrown up his position in order to enter upon a more crowded and responsible life, he would probably have had to leave her side. Therefore he deliberately chose to remain as he was, and was quite content so to do.

This mother of Morel-de-Ville's was a strong-minded old lady. In her youth she had been a celebrated beauty, and her portrait, painted at that time by Paul de la Roche, indicates that in addition to great personal attractions<sup>1</sup> she possessed a decided will of her own, and if the truth were known, her son probably stood in a good deal of awe of her. At any rate, to the end of his days he refused to leave her, and she even continued to live with him after his marriage, dying at an advanced age.

In 1870 came the Franco-Prussian War and the siege of Paris. Morel's father took part in the defence of the

<sup>1</sup> In Morel's home, Cherry Croft, King's Langley, there hangs a striking portrait of this lady, his grandmother, painted by Hyacinthe, a pupil of de la Roche. Morel also possesses photographs of the de la Roche portrait, and of portraits of his great-grandmother and of his great-great-grandmother. All three, it is evident, were remarkably handsome women.

city, and whilst thus serving against the Prussian invader, standing knee-deep in snow, night after night, upon the ramparts, he contracted a terrible disease affecting the marrow of the spine, which eventually—six years later—led to his death.<sup>2</sup>

With the restoration of peace there came a great influx of visitors to Paris and amongst them was his fiancée, an Englishwoman, Emmeline de Horne, who, whilst on a previous visit to France, had become engaged to him. Now that peace was proclaimed she returned, and the two were married, Edmond Morel-de-Ville being at that time forty-eight years of age and the lady twelve years his junior.

The sole offspring of this union was the subject of this biography.

### **His Mother.**

Emmeline de Horne, the daughter of Abraham de Horne, of Peckham, came from a well-known East Anglian family, which had been settled in Essex for over three hundred years. • The de Hornes trace their ancestry in unbroken line from one Oliver Horne, or de Horne, who, with his wife, Jocamina, migrated to England in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, from Nova Kirk, near Ypres, “to avoid,” as the old chronicle puts it, “the persecution of the Duke of Alva,” and settled in Norwich.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Morel, who thus lost his father through the effects of war, has therefore a hereditary reason for detesting this irrational method of settling international differences. In this connection it is interesting to note that his well-known book *Truth and the War* (1916) is dedicated “To my Sons, in the hope that they may help to free Humanity from the curse of Militarism and War.”

<sup>3</sup> “But not liking a strange country, and hearing of the cessation of the persecution in Flanders, after his wife was delivered of a son, whom he called Abraham, the first in the register of that Congregation [here (the Dutch at Norwich), leaving his small family to God’s Almighty protection, he shipte himself for Flanders, to seeke a settlement there again, but in his returne was taken sick of the Plague, and dies on ship bord.”

Their son, Abraham, born in 1571, married Mercy Rush, niece of the sometime rector of Bere Church, *alias* West Dornilands, Essex. The couple had several children, but only one survived to marry, viz. George de Horne, who died of plague at Colchester in 1665. Colchester became the home of the family and remained so until towards the close of the nineteenth century. Thus we read of an Abraham de Horne, "free burgess" of that town in 1741<sup>4</sup> and of a George de Horne purchasing Stanway Hall in 1765. Stanway Hall remained the family seat for more than a century. It stands on an eminence overlooking the road from Colchester to Malden, and was raised from the ruins of the old mansion built by Sir John Swinnerton, Lord Mayor of London, in 1612. The property contains the interesting ruins of Great Stanmore Church.

The de Hornes appear to have become members of the Society of Friends at a very early period,<sup>5</sup> and several of them suffered persecution for their faith.<sup>6</sup> The Friends Burial Ground at Colchester contains numerous monuments to departed members of the family. The de Hornes married into other families of the same religious persuasion. Thus Morel's mother and the first Lord Monkswell (formerly the Right Hon. Sir Robert Porrat Collier) had a common ancestor in Dorothy Fox, daughter of Francis Fox, of St. German's, Cornwall, who married Joseph Collier, of Plymouth, their son Benjamin's only daughter, Mary, marrying Abraham de Horne in 1786.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Vol. xii. Huguenot Society's Publications.

<sup>5</sup> In the register of the births for the quarterly meeting at Essex we find the first entry of the de Hornes to be that of George de Horne, 1662, and the last that of Richard, 1701. See also the "Register of Baptisms in the Dutch Church at Colchester," 1645-1728 in vol. xii. of the publications of the Huguenot Society of London.

<sup>6</sup> Morel, therefore, has in his veins the blood of ancestors who suffered, as he has done, as the result of holding opinions temporarily unpopular with the majority.

<sup>7</sup> Owing to the personal attacks made upon Morel since 1914, it is necessary to relate in some detail these facts concerning his ancestry.

It is an interesting coincidence that the late Lord Monks-well became President of the Congo Reform Association (founded by Morel) in 1906, in a succession to the first President, Earl Beauchamp, who retired from the position on accepting a seat in the Cabinet.

### A French Household.

The household in the Avenue d'Eylau to which Edmond Morel-de-Ville brought his bride consisted of the imperious old lady already mentioned, of his married sister and her husband with their two children, and of himself and his wife. The place was managed on communal lines, the two married couples occupying two different parts of the house, but all having their meals in common. Such an arrangement must have seemed very strange to an Englishwoman, and was perhaps a somewhat trying one. But however that may be, she was not to have a very long experience of it, for in 1877, after only six years of married life, her husband, following upon a severe operation rendered necessary by the disease he had contracted, as already mentioned, during the defence of Paris, died from the shock, leaving her with a small boy, barely four years old.

There followed a bad time. Some legal dispute with the husband's family led to an estrangement, and the widow left the communal roof and took a small flat for herself and her child. Morel's mother was a remarkable woman, proud, independent, spirited and resolute. Already possessing some professional connections of her own, she supplemented the income from these by giving lessons in English, and too proud to seek help from her relatives in England, she set herself with infinite pluck and resource to make a life of her own, and to put by sufficient money to give her son a good English education. From the first she made up her mind that the boy should be

educated in England as an Englishman. This was her firm resolve, and, without any help from outside sources, she carried it through.

### **England.**

In 1881 she sent her son to a private school at Eastbourne, and there the boy spent five happy years, returning to Paris for his holidays. The school was called Madras House, and Morel, in some as yet unpublished reminiscences, has painted a charming picture of those early days, which shows how the beauty of his mother's land—the beauty of England—gripped and held and enthralled him from the very first.

"Great memories some of these ! Memories of luxurious swims from the sands of Berling Gap, of elastic turf, and golden scented gorse, long swelling downs, spinneys redolent in spring with sweet violets. Memories of palpitating excitement at the discovery of a fragment of alleged 'Roman' pottery on one of the numerous tumuli, desperate adventures in rifling birds' nests on forbidden ground ; awesome glimpses from the summit of Beachy Head, and fossil hunts in the soft chalk at its base ; excursions to Pevensey, renowned for its crumbling castle and rusty cannon 'on which Queen Elizabeth sat,' but better loved by me for its woods of primroses and kingcups, with occasional lurking adder and harmless water-snake. Ah ! That virginal joy of realization that God's world at least is fair—can anything ever exceed it in after life ? To the delicate, weedy, passionate, and abnormally sensitive boy, with an instinctive love of the beautiful, the sight and feel of the summer sea, the rush of the perfumed breeze over great open spaces, the picture of a wood primrose-carpeted—these things were a delight unspeakable. And later the zest of them was to be keener still, for the time came when the down-side contained yet fuller joys, because of the bee-orchis and butterfly-orchis which diligent seeking might discover ; the chalk cliffs fruitful in interest because the horned poppy raised its yellow blossoms in cracks and crevices difficult of access, and because on sunny days a chalk-hill blue flashed wings of amethyst and topaz athwart the dazzling whiteness of their surface."

This love of nature has always been a strong influence in Morel's life. It was stimulated by one of his father's relatives, an uncle, M. de Lucy de Fossarieu, who, being amongst other things an ardent naturalist, opened the boy's eyes to the fascinating worlds of insect lore, of butterflies and moths and beetles, of birds and of flowers, so that when in France on his holidays it was not the lure and lights of Paris which attracted him, but the cool and shady woods of St. Cloud, Meudon, and Versailles.

### **Bedford Modern School.**

In 1886 the boy Morel left Madras House and entered Bedford Modern School, where he boarded at the house of the Rev. H. W. Evans. His days there passed without any particular incident worth recording. He avers that he gained no distinction whatever in the scholastic line, although his perfect command of French must have won him many advantages. Games—with the exception of cricket—he rather scamped for entomology, which absorbed his spare time “and whatever the period of the year, there was always something to be done.” Whenever he could, he roamed the countryside and river-banks. His house master was indulgent and gave him many liberties, even allowing him to keep caterpillars and pupæ in his school-box.

At Bedford he stayed for two and a half years, when his mother's increasing ill-health cut short—all too early—his school-days, and caused him to return to Paris.<sup>8</sup> His mother had secured for him a position in the Paris branch of the American banking house of Drexel, Morgan & Co. Here he worked for a year, until gradually the knowledge

<sup>8</sup> His last school report is dated April 1889, and contains the following particulars : Age fifteen years nine months : Form Lower 5th : House and Form Master, Rev. H. W. Evans. House Master's comment: “Very sorry to lose him.”

dawned upon him that the continued exile in Paris was slowly killing his mother. She longed for England, and for home—and in that longing he shared. Many avenues were tried, and eventually he secured the offer of a pursership on a liner trading between Antwerp and the Congo, and owned by a Liverpool firm. But his mother had a horror of the Congo. Her brother-in-law, Major Phillips, had been one of the adventurous band of Englishmen who died out there in the days of Sir Francis de Winton, its first and only English Governor. She wrote asking whether another post in the firm could not be found. In reply there came an offer of a clerkship in the Liverpool office at a salary of £60 a year. This was accepted. The two sailed for England. They rented a small house at Blundellsands (one of the suburbs of Liverpool), and young Morel entered upon his new duties as a clerk in the firm of Messrs. Elder Dempster & Co., Liverpool.

## CHAPTER II

### THE JOURNALIST

The Romance of African trade—Ignorance of public on African affairs—A critic of Germany—A champion of the natives—Contributor to *Pall Mall Gazette* and *Daily Chronicle*—Thanked by War Office—Journalistic coups—Works to improve Franco-British relations—A “Pro-Frenchman”—Expose plot to murder Clemenceau—Famous editor's tribute—Name, naturalization, and marriage.

IT was in 1890 that young Morel, now a lad of seventeen, entered on his duties as a clerk in the office of Messrs. Elder Dempster & Co., only a few months before the promulgation by King Leopold of the notorious secret decrees which deprived the natives of the Congo of the produce of their land and condemned them to a state of slavery. But of this more anon.

These early days were days of straitened circumstances, and the young clerk endeavoured to add to his slender income by teaching French in the evenings. This he did with some success, but it was drudging work and very distasteful. He looked about for some more profitable method of utilizing his spare time. One evening his mother suggested that he had a gift for writing which might be put to some use. At the time this struck him as unlikely. However, the idea stuck in his mind, as ideas will, and in the end he determined to try his luck with his pen, should anything interesting enough to write about ever come his way. He had not long to wait. Liverpool was full of interest, and his work brought

him into daily contact with strange and fascinating things. To quote again from his unpublished reminiscences :—

"The office I was employed in was the centre of West African interests in Liverpool—indeed in England; and West Africa, I was not long in apprehending, seemed likely to occupy a great deal of public attention. There was something very huge and mysterious about the whole subject which exercised an increasing fascination over my mind. Liverpool was full of West African traditions—mostly evil ones. It had been Bristol's rival in the slave trade. The office was always full of black men—stokers and others—coming up for their pay: anglicized native merchants, very wealthy some of them; occasionally a striking figure in handsome flowing native garments. To watch a steamer unload her endless barrels of palm-oil, bags of kernels, bags and casks of rubber, elephant tusks, huge mahogany logs and so on, always sent a thrill of excitement down my back. Everything that came from West Africa seemed impregnated with a wonderful pungent smell. The captains were full of weird yarns about wonderful happenings, horrible native customs and such-like. Then, too, one was always hearing vague political talk—of the French trying to steal our 'hinterland,' of trouble with the Portuguese or with the Niger Company, of a supine Governor who would not build railways into the interior. I plunged into old West African literature: learned the geography of the coast, section by section, with the help of maps and steamer charts; studied its history, its trade and its peoples and customs, its flora and fauna, laid myself out to read up everything I could find about the current problems in the newspapers—our own and also the Continental prints—French especially. . . . The more I read the more interested I grew: the more clearly it seemed to me, first that international rivalries and administrative problems were forcing West Africa to the front rank of national interest, and secondly that the newspapers seemed extraordinarily ignorant of the whole subject."

### Early Press Work.

Having thus acquired an extensive knowledge of the subject of West Africa—a knowledge which was continually being added to in the course of business—Morel proceeded to use this knowledge for the enlightenment

of the general public. As one who was afterwards associated with him on the *African Mail* writes :—

“ Morel was one of the first to find a market for articles about the Coast. He did it thoroughly, no ‘eye-wash,’ no scissors and paste : the walls of his study were lined with African and tropical books, in every language under the sun. He became the recognized expert on the subject.”

His first article appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in December 1893—when just over twenty years of age. It dealt with the subject of French colonial policy in West Africa, and urged the need for more extensive railway construction in the British Protectorates and Crown Colonies, in which respect we were far behind not only the French but even the Portuguese.

From that date onwards a continual stream of articles from his pen, signed and unsigned, appeared in the Press, and as these were always marked by that meticulous accuracy which distinguishes Morel’s work, editors in a very short time became most ready to accept them.<sup>1</sup>

### Criticizes German Colonial Officials.

In view of subsequent events it is particularly interesting to note that one of Morel’s first contributions to the Press (*Pall Mall Gazette*, May 23, 1894) contained a vigorous onslaught on the action of certain German officials in the Cameroons, who had been accused of cruelty towards the natives. And this was not a solitary instance of its kind.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “When I took charge of my paper, there was a tradition and a rule in the office that Mr. Morel’s ‘copy’ was regarded as a sacred institution,” said Mr. Robert Donald, editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, speaking at the final meeting of the Congo Reform Association in 1913 (see Chapter XIV).

<sup>2</sup> Glancing through Morel’s Press cutting books one notices many instances in which he protested against German action in various parts of the world. For example, he was opposed to the idea that Germany should acquire Delagoa Bay (January 1897) and he protested against her action in the Cretan trouble.

Thus early—he was not quite twenty-one—did Mr. Morel come forward to champion the natives of Africa against all—of whatever nation—who would oppress, enslave and exploit them.

Further, in order to show that Mr. Morel entered upon his African work without any preconceived dislike of the administration of the Belgian Congo, it may be as well to mention a *Pall Mall Gazette* article (Feb. 22, 1894) in which he warmly praised the Belgians for their “commendable energy in grappling with the difficulties which beset them.”

### A Great Journalist.

And Morel went on writing. Despite the growing importance and responsibilities of his work with Messrs. Elder Dempster & Co., he found time to write more than ever. His literary activities became amazing. He must have used every minute of his days, and sat up far into the nights. His subsequent public activities in connection with the Congo Reform Association and international politics have obscured the fact that Morel was once a great journalist. He was undoubtedly that. Not only was he one of the leading authorities on West Africa, but he was one of the few English writers who possessed an intimate knowledge of French politics and of the various personalities whose interests, ambitions, rivalries, jealousies and intrigues play so large, and often so obscure, a part in the bewildering political life of the French capital. On these two subjects Morel wrote incessantly, attacking political and administrative injustices with equal vigour and information, hitting at vested interests, and inspiring the views of great newspapers. He wrote for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Daily Chronicle*, the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Speaker* (now the *Nation*), the *Liverpool Daily Post*, the *Liverpool Journal of Commerce* and numerous other

journals. This period of journalistic activity lasted for about ten years—from 1893 to 1903; and long before he had reached the age of thirty this young man was earning a considerable income from his journalistic writings alone.

### Thanked by the War Office.

And once he was thanked by the War Office! An article of his in the *Daily Chronicle* (May 6, 1898) on Rabah, the celebrated Arab chieftain, formerly an associate of the famous Zubeir Pasha, who was threatening Northern Nigeria, brought him a letter, through the editor, from the Intelligence Department of the War Office, asking a number of questions in connection with this important subject. Morel gave the Department all the information at his disposal, and, in acknowledging this, the representative of the War Office said:—

“I cannot thank you sufficiently for your very interesting letter about Rabah. Your information will be of great use to us . . . your kindness in putting your knowledge at my disposal may impel me to apply to you again.”

He was applied to again, and yet again, and gave what help he could.

Another valuable piece of journalistic work accomplished by Morel was his announcement in the *Daily Chronicle* (June 16, August 8, September 13, September 17, November 14, 1898) of the arrival of Major Marchand at Fashoda, of the despatch of expeditions reinforcing him from Pauillac (Bordeaux) “with an extraordinary amount of secrecy,” of their arrival at the Congo, and of their passage through Congo State territory.

In those days, relations between Britain and France were not at all cordial: Lord Salisbury had spoken of the Gallic cock “scratching in the sands of the Sahara”;

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, on one celebrated occasion, had seen fit to advise the French "to mend their manners"; sensational threats "to roll France in mud and blood," and to give her colonies to Germany, had appeared in the *Daily Mail*; and at one moment during the Fashoda incident it looked very much as though war might break out between the two nations.

All through this period Morel worked steadily, as far as the situation in West Africa was concerned, for the improvement of Franco-British relations. That situation was a delicate one, and taxed the diplomatic resources of both countries to the uttermost. French territorial expansion in West Africa had caused great jealousy and alarm. "British and French officers, with excitable native troops under their command, remained facing one another in the far interior—a few hundred yards distance—for weeks at a time, awaiting instructions from their respective Governments."<sup>3</sup> Whilst others were doing their worst to inflame the situation, Morel used all the influence he could to prevent a rupture. He did his best to get the British public to recognize the enterprise, efficiency and capacity of the French Colonial Administrators, and to disabuse them of the foolish notion that "the ideals of French colonial management in West Africa" could only be represented "in the light of a custom-house official and a soldier,"<sup>4</sup> whilst at the same time he helped to the extent of his power to create an informed public opinion on the whole question such as would give to the British Government the backing required to secure from France a non-differential treatment of British trade in the French West African Colonies;

<sup>3</sup> *Affairs of West Africa*, by E. D. Morel (Heinemann, 1902), p. 246.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 265. It is amusing to note that at that time Morel, owing to his efforts to show that the wrongs of the dispute were not wholly on the side of France, was taunted in certain quarters with being "pro-French."

and this was happily brought to pass by the Anglo-French Convention of June 1898.<sup>5</sup>

Whilst in this way giving the fullest possible credit to the French for the valuable work they had accomplished in West Africa, Morel strongly disapproved of the French advance under Marchand into the Nile Valley. He looked upon this as a piece of pure aggression, and supported the attitude of the British Government throughout in that affair.

### Expose Plot to Murder Clemenceau.

Perhaps the greatest of all Morel's journalistic exploits was his exposure of a plot to murder Clemenceau, Trarieux, Pressensé, and other prominent defenders of Captain Dreyfus.

This appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* on November 8, 1898, and was editorially presented as follows:—

#### A PARIS PLOT.

#### ALARMING STORY OF PROJECTED MURDER.

#### REMARKABLE CONFIRMATION OF OUR NEWS.

"We received on Sunday evening from a correspondent well known to us, and who has furnished us on many occasions with news of much importance and invariable accuracy, an astounding narrative of alleged preparations for violence, and even assassination, against the principal supporters of ex-Captain Dreyfus in Paris."

(Morel's story followed.)

The *Daily Chronicle* editorially continued:—

"In accordance with our invariable custom, we did not publish the above until we had obtained sufficient confirmation to warrant the printing of so alarming a narrative. We immediately telegraphed to our Paris correspondent as follows:—

"Have conversation instantly with Pressensé. Ask if he has

<sup>5</sup> See also Chapter III.

received any official warning of personal danger. Ditto, if possible, Clemenceau, Trarieux?"

The Paris correspondent's story, after seeing these three gentlemen, followed, and the editorial comment closed thus :—

"It will be seen that in certain important particulars our correspondent, knowing nothing of our information, confirms it literally. He confirms it in another particular which we withhold for the present."

It is possible that this timely exposure prevented a concerted and planned attempt upon these men's lives from taking place. It was certainly a remarkable triumph for a young journalist of twenty-five.

### Famous Editor's Tribute.

Morel's chief work for the *Daily Chronicle* was done between the years 1896 and 1899, when that journal was under the joint-editorship of H. W. Massingham and Sir Henry Norman. Mr. Massingham resigned his editorship in 1899 on the question of the Boer War, and in a letter to Morel at that time (December 8, 1899), the famous editor paid a handsome tribute to the work of his young contributor :—

"It has always been a pleasure to me," he wrote, "to be associated with you on the *Daily Chronicle* and to mark the admirable and energetic work that you have done for the paper."

Amongst the many well-known editors and journalists with whom Morel has been associated in his literary work may be mentioned, in addition to the foregoing, Sir Douglas Straight and Mr. H. N. Cust of the *Pall Mall Gazette*; the late Sir James Knowles of the *Nineteenth Century*; Sir Percy Bunting of the *Contemporary Review*; Mr. J. L. Hammond of the *Speaker* (now the *Nation*);

Mr. C. P. Scott of the *Manchester Guardian*; Sir Edward Russell of the *Liverpool Daily Post*; the late Mr. W. T. Stead; Mr. Robert Donald of the *Daily Chronicle*; Mr. A. G. Gardiner of the *Daily News and Leader*; Mr. J. S. R. Phillips of the *Yorkshire Post*; Mr. J. Nicol Dunn and Mr. Fabian Ware, successive editors of the *Morning Post*; Sir Valentine Chirol, for many years foreign editor of the *Times*, and Mr. Grieg, for some time colonial editor of the same journal; M. de Pressensé, for many years foreign editor, and M. Pierre Mille, colonial editor of *Le Temps*; M. Charles Peaix-Séailles, editor of the *Courier Europein*; and many others.

### Founded the "African Mail."

In 1903 Morel, who, three years previously had severed his connection with Messrs. Elder Dempster & Co.,<sup>6</sup> founded the *African Mail*, a weekly journal devoted to the administrative and economic development of British West Africa, which he edited until the close of 1915. During his editorship the paper acquired great influence, was widely read amongst those who were concerned with West Africa, and was distinguished for its championship of native rights, its descriptions of native laws and customs, and its fearless criticism of abuses. Many distinguished authorities contributed to its columns, and its first issue (April 3, 1903) contained letters of encouragement from Sir Charles Dilke, Sir Harry Johnston, Sir George Denton (then Governor of Gambia), Sir Edward Russell, Mr. Alfred (afterwards Lord) Emmott, Mrs. John Richard Green, Prof. Ronald Ross, Mr. W. T. Stead and others, not to mention Mr. Winston Churchill. It appeared as the official organ of the British Cotton Growing Association and the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine.

<sup>6</sup> See p. 76.

"All who are interested and perplexed for the future of tropical Africa," said the *Manchester Guardian*, "will welcome Mr. Morel's new weekly paper. . . . The consolidation and strengthening of native institutions, under which the natural attributes of the race can alone attain development, high-minded justice, the willing co-operation of the natives—these are some of the heads of the policy advocated by Mr. Morel."

Through many vicissitudes the *African Mail* never fell below the high standard set for it by its editor.

From 1904 to 1912 Morel also edited the monthly "Official Organ" of the Congo Reform Association.

### Change of Name.

In the early nineties, when writing for the Press, Morel, partly at the suggestion of a well-known novelist, decided to drop, for literary purposes, the second half of his surname and to use the first half only. He began by signing his contributions "M." A little later he took to using the familiar initials "E. D. M." and the signature E. D. Morel. In course of time he became so well known publicly by the abbreviation that he retained it for all purposes and dropped the "de-Ville" altogether. The full family names of "Morel's" parents have been printed in *Who's Who* ever since he himself has figured in that work of reference.

In 1893, being a French subject, Morel came under the operations of the French conscription laws. Despite his extraordinary energy, he was a delicate youth, and after a medical examination he was exempted from service of all kinds. Three years later, on becoming engaged, he was naturalized and became by law, what he already was by education and upbringing, an Englishman. In 1896 he married Mary Florence Richardson, daughter of John W. Richardson of Liverpool and of Anna Carwithen, a member of a well-known Devonshire family. "In all his endeavours," says Maurice Whitlow,



MOREL AT THE AGE OF 20.



writing in 1909,<sup>7</sup> "he has been helped and encouraged at every turn by the counsel and comradeship of a good woman."

Those who had the privilege of knowing Mrs. Morel during the sad months of 1917 know that she is a brave woman as well, and realize to some extent how precious that "counsel and comradeship" must have been.<sup>8</sup> Morel's book, *Great Britain and the Congo* (1909), bears the following touching dedication:—

TO HER  
WHOSE STEADFAST COURAGE  
AND UNSWERVING FAITH HAVE  
MADE IT POSSIBLE.

The Morels have five children, four sons and one daughter.

<sup>7</sup> In the *Millgate Monthly*, November 1909.

<sup>8</sup> M. René Claparède, in a recent pamphlet, relates the following incident: "Morel and I were walking up and down the railway platform at Dijon. Suddenly he said to me, 'I should never have done what I have without my wife's help. I was often discouraged. It was she who invariably made me strong again by saying to me, "Go on"'" (*Deux Journalistes, J. Condurier et E. D. Morel*, by René Claparède, Lausanne 1918).

## CHAPTER III

### THE WEST AFRICAN EXPERT

Relations with the Congo—Chief of Congo Department of Messrs. Elder Dempster & Co.—Sir Alfred Jones's right-hand man—Campaign to avert war with France—An opponent of Jingoism—Reason, not force—Advocates Free Trade and the Open Door—First success.

WE must now turn to 1890 and to the junior clerk in the offices of Messrs. Elder Dempster & Co. at Liverpool. These offices, as already stated, were the centre of West African interests in England, and it is a curious coincidence that only a few days after Morel's arrival the firm secured a contract which enabled them to inaugurate an occasional service of steamers between Antwerp and the Congo.

At first gradually, but afterwards rapidly, the relations of the firm with the Congo developed. The irregular service became a monthly one, and then a three-weekly one. Morel's knowledge of French was found extremely useful, and, as may be imagined, a young man of his industry, knowledge and ability was not destined to remain a junior clerk for long. His duties increased, a special department known as the Congo Department was created, he was placed in charge of it, and 1895 found him making frequent journeys to Brussels and Antwerp, to interview the authorities of the Congo Free State, to discuss affairs with the Company's agents, and to witness the departure of the steamers. It was in

the course of these visits, but at a later date, that Morel's suspicions were first aroused as to the true character of the Congo Free State and of its methods of administration—suspicions which afterwards, on being confirmed, led to the most astounding exposure, and most wonderful public campaign, of modern times.

In the meantime, as related in the preceding chapter, Morel was acquiring an extraordinarily thorough and extensive knowledge of African affairs generally, was studying the whole vast subject in all its multitudinous details, was soaking himself in its history and literature, was assimilating the nature of its economic problems, and was rapidly becoming one of the leading authorities, if not the leading authority, on West Africa in the country.

### Sir Alfred Jones.

The head of the firm of Elder Dempster & Co. was Mr. (afterwards Sir) Alfred Jones, a man of great enterprise and energy, tremendous personal force, and the Chairman of the African Section of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce. To such a man, Morel was invaluable. Was it necessary to push on with railway construction in the West African colonies or to institute necessary reforms in administration or policy, there was Morel with all the essential facts at his finger-ends—facts which Mr. Alfred Jones was able to place before the Secretary of State in a forceful and convincing way. And there was Morel, too, to advocate these same proposals and reforms in the public Press, and to enlighten public opinion upon matters vital to the interests of West Africa, but upon which the readers of the newspapers, and even the newspapers themselves, were largely ignorant. The services which Morel has been able to render to the cause of civilization in West Africa, in this unobtrusive way,

are incalculable. They certainly deserve the gratitude of his countrymen. One instance will suffice before we pass on to other matters.

### Working for Peace with France.

In 1898, as indicated in Chapter II,<sup>1</sup> great concern was felt in this country at the rapid extension of French territory in West Africa. It was feared that the British colonies in that region would be isolated, cut off by a high protective tariff from the markets of the interior, and commercially ruined. The feeling between the two countries was becoming exacerbated, and, as usual, there were plenty of people on both sides of the Channel who were only too glad of the opportunity to create bad blood between France and Britain, and even to go to the length of threatening war.

Against this method of unfastening the Gordian knot by severing it with the sword Morel set his face like flint. It is true that he strongly disapproved of the high protective tariffs advocated by the extreme French colonial school. High protection, he was certain, would be ruinous to West Africa, and would generate bitter feeling between Britain and France. He was convinced of the merits of Free Trade. He believed that a policy of Free Trade and the Open Door was essential to the welfare of West Africa. He believed also, with Cobden, that such a policy would help to bind nations together and would remove one of the causes of war. But he did not believe that the yells, shouts, and insults of ignorant rage were efficacious methods of convincing an opponent, or of securing concessions from another nation. He did not believe in maddening the people by the frenzied rhetoric of Yellow Journalism. He did not believe in trying to force France to abandon her tariff policy by

<sup>1</sup> See p. 28.

threats of war. A war between France and England, he was convinced, would be fatal to the prosperity of West Africa and to the future welfare of the world. The problem was certainly a difficult one, but it could be solved by patience, understanding, and mutual forbearance. And so he threw himself into the task of persuading the people chiefly concerned that this special difficulty in West Africa could be settled much more expeditiously and satisfactorily by methods of Reason and Conciliation than by those of Militarism and Force. He did his utmost, too, to remove from the public mind those misapprehensions as to the true nature of the problem which, if allowed to remain and to develop, might easily lead to a futile and disastrous conflict.

"It is essential," he wrote at a later date, "that Englishmen and Frenchmen, in order to work harmoniously together in the future, should thoroughly understand one another's points of view in this connection. . . . A policy of Free Trade is one which in West Africa spells commercial success to the nation which adopts it. . . . A natural community of interests exists between British and French merchants in West Africa . . . every action calculated to bring them into closer relationship is a step in the right direction."<sup>2</sup>

### Advocates the Open Door.

In pursuit of this object Morel, acting through Messrs. Elder Dempster & Co., organized a campaign amongst the British Chambers of Commerce, in order to induce them to take collective action in urging upon "the Foreign Office the necessity of securing the Open Door for British trade in French West Africa." This campaign was a great success. Petitions rained upon the Foreign Office from all parts of the country; and in response to this agitation Lord Salisbury succeeded by peaceful methods in obtaining from the French Government an agreement that no differential tariffs should be

<sup>2</sup> *Affairs of West Africa*, pp. 246, 247, 248.

placed upon British goods for thirty years in most of the French West African possessions.

"The Franco-English Convention of June, 1898," said M. Bohn, head of the leading firm of French West African merchants, addressing the Marseilles Geographical Society, in September, 1898, "by abolishing for a period of thirty years all differential duties in the Ivory Coast and Dahomey, has assured for that period the commercial prosperity of these colonies."

This was Morel's first important success. He succeeded because he had already grasped one great truth—a truth which still seems to elude so many people—the truth that a policy of Free Trade and the Open Door not only would make for the prosperity of West Africa but would help to draw into closer and ever closer relationship the real interests of all the countries concerned.

But by this time he had also grasped the truth of another great principle—a principle the application of which was destined to bring about a great change in African affairs, and to affect profoundly the course of Morel's own career. So important is this principle that we must reserve the discussion of it for the next chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### A CHAMPION OF NATIVE RIGHTS

Native rights *versus* capitalistic exploitation—The treasure-house of the tropics—Native ownership in land—A subtle form of slavery—Opposition of vested interests—Sir Harry Johnston and “Morelism”—African land tenure—A hardworking and industrious people.

THE ordinary member of the public who thinks of Morel in relation to Africa probably looks upon him as “the man who put an end to the Congo atrocities.”

This is a very inadequate and superficial summary of his work. It is true that, in the course of his activities in connection with the Congo Reform Association, Morel succeeded in putting a stop to a very cruel, barbarous, and atrocious regime. But his chief title to fame is based on a very much wider and more permanent foundation than this. It is based on the fact that he was the great champion of “native rights” as opposed to “capitalistic exploitation” in tropical Africa. And he was the champion of those rights not only in the interests of the natives—although it was this humane motive that was the driving force in his mind—but in the interests of the whole of Africa and of the future of civilization. His point of view was not only that of a humanitarian (although it was that as well, and perhaps primarily that), it was the point of view of (in the best sense of the term) a world-statesman.

### The Tropical Treasure-house.

Tropical Africa is a country of immensely valuable natural resources. It is a veritable storehouse of the raw materials urgently needed by modern industry. Amongst its chief products are palm-oil and kernels, rubber, ivory, gum arabic, gum copal, shea-butter, kola-nuts, gutta-percha, fibres (such as those used in musical instruments and in brush-making), coco-nuts, bananas, castor-oil, red pepper, indigo, cotton, ground-nuts, coffee, cocoa, cereals, ebony, mahogany and other valuable woods. Its soil, in many parts, is of surpassing richness. Its population, in some regions, is very dense; and generally speaking, it is not suitable, and never can be, as a home for Europeans. How is such a country to be treated?

There are two methods. One is to dispossess the native of his rights in the land, to declare that the whole territory and its products is the property of some European state or states, or of financial groups within those states, and to exploit the country in the interests of European capitalism, using the native either as a slave or as a hired labourer. This method leads to the degradation of the native, and eventually, in Morel's opinion, to the ruin of the country. The other method is to preserve the rights of the native in the land, to recognize him as a free man—as a human being and not as a mere tool of industry—and to help him, by means of administrative assistance and supervision, to develop the natural resources of his own country. This method, says Morel, will guard the native against exploitation, and will lead to the continued and progressive prosperity of tropical Africa. It is, therefore, the method which Morel, ever since he became an authority on West Africa, has persistently and courageously advocated in the teeth of the bitterest and most malignant opposition.

### The Two Policies.

The key to the whole problem is the question of native land tenure—the preservation of native rights in the land.

"Native ownership in land,"<sup>1</sup> says Morel, "must needs be the foundation-stone of all normal European rule in the African tropics, because the economic object of normal European rule is the development of commercial relations, and because any commercial relationship between the European and the native is impossible, unless the native has articles to sell with which to purchase manufactured goods."

In other words, as long as the native has free access to the soil, he will develop his land, he will put forth every effort to increase its productive value, he will exchange its produce with manufactured goods sent from Europe, a normal commercial relationship will be set up, imports and exports will expand, the prosperity of the whole country will increase, and, incidentally, the workers of Britain or France or Belgium will benefit, first by the employment created by the manufacture of the goods exported to West Africa, secondly by the increased supply of valuable foodstuffs and raw materials.

On the other hand, if the native is dispossessed of his rights, the land and its products become the property of European capitalists and concessionaires. But there is nobody to develop that land but the native. He must therefore be used as a wage-slave or a serf. Deprived of his rights, he puts no effort into his work. So constituted is he that, cut off from land and liberty, he often dies of sheer unhappiness.<sup>2</sup> If force is used to make him work, we have a regime of atrocities such as existed in the Congo. Possessing no property of his own, he

<sup>1</sup> *Great Britain and the Congo*, by E. D. Morel (Smith, Elder & Co., 1909), p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> See *Great Britain and the Congo*, chapter ix.

has nothing with which to purchase manufactured goods. Consequently imports fall, to the detriment of the workers in Europe, whilst a handful of concessionaires pile up enormous fortunes out of the products they have appropriated by a stroke of the pen. Eventually, after perhaps several native risings, sternly suppressed by machine-guns and aeroplanes, the country becomes largely depopulated,<sup>3</sup> its trade dwindle, the cost of securing any products at all increases, and the concessionaires, having obtained all they can get from it, throw the ruined and bankrupt colony, with its history of untold suffering and unspeakable cruelty, upon the backs of the tax-payers at home.

These, then, are the two policies which can be applied to tropical Africa, as Morel saw them twenty years ago, and as indeed they exist to-day. He found himself confronted by a public which knew nothing whatsoever about the problem, and which was therefore indifferent to its implications. He determined to arouse it from this indifference. Despite fierce opposition from vested interests, opposition which has grown in bitterness, ferocity and unscrupulousness without a break up to the present time, he threw himself into the fight for an enlightened policy in tropical Africa, and for the defence of the rights of the natives as against the demands of the exploiters. In article after article, pamphlet after pamphlet, and book after book, he championed the rights of those natives with a wealth of argument, and a knowledge of native customs, astonishing in one who had never at that time set foot in West Africa; and gradually he had the satisfaction of seeing the formation in this country, in France, in Belgium, in Switzerland, in Italy, and to some extent in Germany,

<sup>3</sup> The population of the Congo Free State dwindled from about 20,000,000 in 1881 to 8,500,000 in 1911.

of a body of able and influential men and women, vigilant to see that the principles of "Morelism," as Sir Harry Johnston has described the policy advocated by Morel, were applied to all problems of West African administration.

### Native Rights in Land.

The first point Morel had to drive home to the knowledge of his readers was the fact that a system of native rights to the land in West Africa really existed, and had existed, as far as could be ascertained, from time immemorial, and that this system was just, and adapted to the needs of the country.

This fortunately he had no difficulty in doing, as all the competent authorities and explorers were agreed upon the point.

"If there is one thing more than another upon which the most competent students of West Africa are agreed," says Morel, "it is the tenaciousness of the West African negro to his landed rights. Land tenure in West Africa has been properly described as a 'cult.' The most experienced English, French and German observers have noted this characteristic. Wherever it has been adequately studied, the system of native land tenure, in its tribal, family, individual and commercial aspects, is found to be at once simple in its broad lines, elaborate in its details and approaching in many respects to the most advanced democratic conceptions of Western Europe."<sup>4</sup>

"The system of native land tenure is essentially just, thoroughly adapted to the needs of the country and its people . . . there can be no justification whatever for the break-up of land tenure, or for the alienation of native property, under any pretext. It is morally indefensible, and what is morally indefensible is seldom politically wise."<sup>5</sup>

"In the coast-wise districts of West Africa . . . it may be accepted as a rule (whatever differentiation may exist in the system of land tenure in widely removed districts) . . . that every square yard of

<sup>4</sup> *Affairs of West Africa* (Heinemann, 1902), p. 169.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 173.

the country is owned. Sarbah for the Gold Coast, Clozel and Delafosse for the Ivory Coast, Ellis for Yoruba, Mary Kingsley for the Rivers, Bolin for French Guinea, Fabre for Dahomey, have borne witness in their respective fields of observation to this fact—that there is no land without an owner.”<sup>6</sup>

“ In all inhabited districts land is never without an owner, whose claims, whether tribal or family, are as sacred in native unwritten law as they would be if duly set forth in a legal document, in accordance with the full requirements of European jurisprudence.”<sup>7</sup>

“ Wherever their forms have been examined, native laws of land tenure have been found to repose upon just principles, to be thoroughly well understood, recognized and adhered to by the people of the land.”<sup>8</sup>

“ Speaking generally, throughout tropical Africa there is no such thing as unowned land, where there is population. The public writings of the most authorized exponents of Native Customary Law in tropical Africa—Ellis, Sarbah, Mary Kingsley, Ballay, De Brazza, Clozel, Binger, Vilamur, Delafosse, Rayner, Healy, Dreste, Bohn, Blyden, Zimmerman : the universal experience (much of it recorded) of African administrators, missionaries and merchants—are conclusive, and cover virtually the whole of Western Africa from the Senegal to the Congo.”<sup>9</sup>

“ And what form does this native land tenure . . . actually take ? Here, again, the evidence is voluminous and conclusive. With few exceptions, native tenure takes the form of communal ownership of the land and its fruits ; a form proper to the condition of native society where the whole social structure is patriarchal and communistic, outcome of inherent usage, immemorial custom and racial necessities. In certain regions, a feudalism has developed, and the land is owned by the King and nobles ; but this is the exception. In certain regions, too, individual tenure is found existing side by side with communal ownership ; but this also is the exception. In Mohammedan Northern Nigeria communism has developed into nationalization. This native ownership in land, which is admitted and recognized, is, then, communal in form.”<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Affairs of West Africa* (Heinemann, 1902), p. 173.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* (Heinemann, 1904).

<sup>9</sup> *Great Britain and the Congo* (Smith, Elder & Co., 1909), pp. 87-8.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p. 88. In a memorandum written for the Colonial Office in 1912 Morel described the native system of land tenure in more detail,

### Will the Native Work?

Morel's second point was one which he had more difficulty in getting the British public to accept. This was the fact that the West African native, when treated as a free man, and allowed to retain his rights in the land, was hard-working and industrious, and capable, with a little administrative encouragement and assistance, of developing his country to a high level of commercial prosperity. Advocates of the concessionaire system naturally did their best to spread the impression that the native, when left to himself, was lazy and incompetent, and would only work under compulsion.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, they argued, if the country was to be developed at all, the system of land tenure would have to be changed, and the native would have to be set to work either as a hired labourer or under some form of forcible control. As this argument accorded with the general view of the "man in the street" that all "natives" and "niggers" and dark-skinned people generally were a "set of worthless, lazy beggars," it naturally found ready credence, and Morel was confronted with a hard task in trying to counteract it. But this he eventually did, and it is to his success in this direction that Sir Harry Johnston more particularly refers when he says of Morel's writings that "they have influenced Governments and actually contributed to an historical change in the outlook of the European."

That the African native is a "useless and dangerous brute," says Morel, "is one of the many fictions which

and pointed out that the word "communal," although roughly descriptive, perhaps did not define the system with sufficient exactitude (see Chapter XIII).

<sup>11</sup> During this period the arguments of the concessionaires were naturally supported, for similar reasons, by the South African Rand Lords, their defenders in the Press, and the advocates of Chinese labour for the Transvaal.

pass for truths about Africa.”<sup>12</sup> It is true that in the more inaccessible regions, when the wants and desires of the native have not increased and expanded as the result of contact with white civilization, the native is not inclined to wear himself to death with hard work. But then there is no need for him to do so. The “soil is so fertile . . . that it produces with little trouble everything which the native requires,”<sup>13</sup> whilst the climate, being hot, “militates against great physical energy.”

But when his desires are stimulated by trade and increased facilities for locomotion, the native, working for himself and his family on his own tribal ground, is as industrious as any one could wish. Take the palm-oil and palm-kernel industry alone. It “permanently employs hundreds of thousands of negroes—men, women and children.”<sup>14</sup> The oil, “shipped in hundreds of thousands of gallons from West Africa, is brought down to the coast bit, by bit, in small receptacles, often from considerable distances inland, on the heads” of these so-called lazy people; the kernels are “each . . . extracted with infinite trouble from an extremely hard shell,” and it takes “four hundred of them to make a single pound of kernels, and . . . the market value in Southern Nigeria of those four hundred kernels, to the native, is the maximum sum of one penny.”<sup>15</sup> There is “abundant and cumulative evidence of his willingness to trade, to learn, to take on new industries, to follow up everywhere his natural profession of agriculture . . . of his enterprise and producing capacity in the . . . oil-palm, ground-nut, mahogany and rubber industries.”<sup>16</sup> In the Upper Nile Valley “he works in iron, moulds pottery, has in many cases a highly developed, artistic

<sup>12</sup> *Affairs of West Africa*, p. 181.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 180.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 76.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p. 174.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 77.

instinct, manufactures cloth and ingenious and elaborate weapons of offence.”<sup>17</sup> In the Congo he “sustains himself by agriculture, fishing and hunting. In various parts of the Congo he cultivates manioc, millet, rice, maize, bananas, sweet potatoes, sugar-cane, serame, sorghum, ground-nuts (for food), etc.”<sup>18</sup> In a memorandum drawn up for the Foreign Office in 1909 on “Native rights in the land and its fruits in the Congo,”<sup>19</sup> Morel quotes a great number of authorities testifying to the industry of that unhappy region in the days before King Leopold began what he termed its “moral and material regeneration.” “Forests over an enormous distance are cleared for sowing of maize and the insertion of banana cuttings” (Dr. Vedy). “The natives of the cataracts region have immense plantations of palm-trees, manioc, sweet potatoes, ground-nuts” (Laurent). “The forest was cultivated for one to one and a half hours’ march, and the plantations often as well cared for as those of Flanders” (Laurent). “The abundance of food supplies testifies to the hard work done by the race” (Laurent). “There are great plantations of maize, manioc, castor-oil, sugar-cane and ground-nuts” (Dr. Deken). The natives are “keen, enterprising, high spirited” . . . “possess commercial knowledge” . . . “are devoted to trade” (Sir H. M. Stanley). “Possess truly remarkable trading and labour capacities” (Laurent). And, of a primitive people, “wherever they settle, the jungle around them is soon converted into fruitful fields, yielding sweet potatoes, or various forms of corn” (Dr. Ansorge). “Every year,” says Morel, “the voluntary labour of the West African negro supplies Europe with nearly four millions sterling of palm-oil and kernel alone, re-

<sup>17</sup> *Affairs in West Africa*, p. 181.

<sup>18</sup> *Great Britain and the Congo*, p. 108.

<sup>19</sup> Afterwards published in *Great Britain and the Congo*.

quiring infinite time, infinite toil, and infinite trouble in their preparation . . . the voluntary labour of the natives of . . . Senegal and . . . Gambia supplies Europe every year with ground-nuts to the tune of over one million sterling. . . . From West Africa the negro sends us every year thousands of tons of precious cabinet woods involving the expenditure of an enormous amount of physical labour in felling and squaring the logs and floating them down the rivers and creeks to the sea.”<sup>20</sup> Voluntary native labour supplies Europe with tons of “cocoa” and “mahogany,” and an increasing quantity of cotton. Of the life of the native agriculturists of Nigeria he says:—

“ What a busy intensive life it is ! From sunrise to sunset, save for a couple of hours in the heat of the day, every one appears to have his hands full. . . . The men driving the animals to pasture, or hoeing in the fields, or busy at the forge or dye-pit or loom ; or making ready to sally forth to the nearest market with the products of the local industry. The women cooking their breakfasts, or picking or spinning cotton, or attending to the younger children, or pounding corn . . . or separating on flat slabs of stone the seed from the cotton lint. . . . The sowing or reaping, and the intermediate seasons, bring with them their several tasks. The ground must be cleared and hoed, and the sowing of the staple crops concluded before the early rains in May, which will cover the land with the sheet of tender green shoots of guinea corn, maize and millet, and, more rarely, wheat. When these crops have ripened, the heads of the grain will be cut off, the bulk of them either marketed or stored. . . . The stalks . . . will be carefully gathered and stacked for fencing purposes. Nothing . . . is wasted in this country. . . . The bees receive particular attention for their honey and their wax. . . . Before harvest-time has dawned . . . the secondary crops come in for attention. Cassava and cotton, indigo and sugar-cane, sweet potatoes and tobacco, onions and ground-nuts, beans and pepper, jams and rice, according to locality and suitability of the soil. . . .

“ It is a revelation to see the cotton-fields, the plants in raised rows three feet apart, the land having in many cases been precedently

<sup>20</sup> *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* (Heinemann, 1904), p. 100. These figures, of course, had enormously increased by 1913.

enriched by a catch-crop of beans. . . . The fields themselves are protected . . . by tall neat fencing of guinea-corn stalks, or reeds, kept in place by native rope of uncommon strength. . . . Equally astonishing are the irrigated farms . . . on the banks of the water-courses. The plots are marked out with the mathematical precision of squares on a chessboard, divided by ridges with frequent gaps permitting of a free influx of water from the central channel.”<sup>21</sup>

Of the Northern Nigeria farmer he writes:—

“Rotation of crops and green manuring is thoroughly understood . . . every scrap of fertilizing substance is husbanded by this expert and industrious agricultural people.”<sup>22</sup>

Writing of the industrial life of the same districts, he says:—

“Iron-stone is common in many parts of the country and is extensively worked. . . . Hoe-handles, mortars, pestles, beds, doors, gins, spindles, bobbins, looms, shuttles, saddles, riding-boots, slippers, bridles, scissors, razors, rope; fishing-nets, earthenware, cooking-pots, lamps, water-bottles, pipes, are among the innumerable articles turned out by the artisan in Northern Nigeria. Indigo dye-pits are to be found in many towns. . . . The great tanning centre is Kano. . . . The completed skins, dyed deep red or orange with native dyes . . . are as soft to the touch as Russian leather. They are greatly appreciated in the Western world, and the trade is a rapidly increasing one.”<sup>23</sup>

Thus with argument, illustration and quotation, Morel drove his second point home. The natives had a David to champion them at last—a David who was determined to assure to them their rights in their own lands<sup>24</sup> and to prove to the world the falsity of the maliciously motived slander that they would never work unless and until they were compelled.

<sup>21</sup> *Nigeria* (Smith, Elder & Co., 1911), pp. 112–115.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 115.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 120–122.

<sup>24</sup> Mr. Morel’s labours in relation to this special piece of work received official recognition in his appointment in 1911 to serve on the West African Lands Committee, which was still sitting at the Colonial Office when the war broke out (see Chapter XIII).

## CHAPTER V

### THE FREE TRADER

Legitimate commerce and exploitation—The evils of the concessionaire system—A practical policy—Enlisting the Free Traders—Attitude at first misunderstood—Sir Charles Dilke convinced—Tributes from eminent French and Belgian authorities—Mr. Brailsford's view—The Chambers of Commerce assist the Humanitarians.

FOR a movement to become successful, it must embrace many issues, and rally many forces to its support.

The wrongs and sufferings of the natives, great as they were, might not of themselves have aroused sufficient practical indignation in this country to bring the movement for the defence of native rights to swift and overwhelming success. People might have argued, and with some justice, that others, nearer home, were suffering also, and enduring cruel wrongs—the denizens of the slums, the victims of landlordism and of our competitive capitalistic system—and that their sufferings must be alleviated, and the system which oppressed them overthrown, before they could spare the time to go crusading on behalf of the remote West African. And although thousands would undoubtedly have been stirred and shocked by Morel's revelations of the abominable atrocities perpetrated in the Congo (just as they were “stirred and shocked” by Mr. Gladstone's revelations of the atrocities perpetrated on the Bulgarians and Armenians), the movement to put these cruelties to an end might have dragged on many weary years without result but

for the fact that this great advocate, by pressing forward, in addition to the two points described in the previous chapter, a third and very important argument, was able to rally to its support certain powerful trading and commercial interests, legitimately concerned in the maintenance of the principle of Free Trade and the Open Door, a principle in which, as we have already seen<sup>1</sup> Morel was a profound believer.

### Morel's Third Point.

This point was as follows: As long as the native retained his rights in the land, and was a free man, he was able to trade. British merchants sent their goods to West Africa, and there exchanged them by the free process of barter with the products produced by the natives. This was legitimate trading, and benefited both parties. The native secured his cotton and woollen cloths, muslins, silk yarn, paper, salt, copper, brass and iron rods, sugar, tea, agricultural implements, and beads and other ornaments for his womenkind, and the merchant obtained in exchange palm-oil, rubber and such other products as are mentioned in the previous chapter; and during the preceding one hundred years or so an increasingly profitable trade had sprung up between Britain and West Africa.

But under the concessionaire system the native was deprived of all his land, and "of all its products." The land and all it produced became the property of the state or, for a term of years, of the concessionaire. At once trade with the native ceased. The native could no longer, for instance, offer the merchant any rubber, because the rubber was not his to offer; it belonged to the concessionaire, and to trade with it was to trade in stolen property. As for the native, he was

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter III.

merely a landless and propertyless slave—one of the dispossessed.

Not only did the interests of the legitimate trader suffer, but in the regions where this system was established they were absolutely extinguished.

### **Attitude at first Misunderstood.**

Morel saw at once the great advantage of rallying these interests to his side in his campaign for native rights ; and this he proceeded to do, taking at the same time the risk that his motives might be misinterpreted. This they certainly were.

The henchmen of King Leopold, for example, declared that these “Free Trade” arguments of Morel showed that the whole Congo Reform agitation arose from British commercial jealousy, and accused their exponent of being merely an “agent” of British commercialism. And in this country also Morel’s attitude was not at first wholly understood—especially by those who supported the Reform movement mainly upon humanitarian grounds. But despite the abuse of his opponents and the doubts—much harder to bear—of his friends, Morel never swerved an inch from the line he had decided to follow, and in course of time this contention of his was recognized by almost every one as the key to the whole position.

“Your own chief contribution to the movement of which you are now properly the head,” wrote the late Sir Charles Dilke in a published letter, dated February 6, 1908, “was that you brought, to those of us who had originally raised the matter, a firm grasp of a great principle. . . .

“You showed us that all depended upon the right of the original black inhabitants of the soil to own their property and to carry on trade. . . . There always lay a danger in our public becoming wearied and accepting an imperfect solution which would, in fact, give up all that we had been fighting for. Your energy has preserved us from that risk, and as long as you are there to fight I have no fear.”

**French and Belgian Tributes.**

This central truth was brought out very strikingly in some of the speeches at the public presentation to Morel in 1911.<sup>2</sup> Emil Vandervelde's tribute to the wisdom of Morel's attitude could not, for example, have been more complete :—

" It was Morel who opened my eyes . . . , " he said. " It was he who made me understand that the system established on the Congo by King Leopold II was not the fatal result, at the same time as the necessary consequence, of the developments of the tropical regions of the world, but a monstrous anomaly—monstrous as much for its economic, as from the human, standpoint. It was he who showed me that it was essential that the system itself should disappear, by recognizing to the natives their rights in the land, the freedom of their labour, and their social freedom."

M. Pierre Mille, the well-known French traveller and author, and the chairman of the French Congo League, was equally emphatic :—

" I am very proud publicly to state that if I was the first in France to denounce the crimes which were being committed in the Leopoldian Congo, it was because Morel converted me : and, I admit it to my shame, he did not at first succeed. It took him more than a year of incessant letters, of irrefutable proofs communicated to me, to convince me of what, after all, was as clear as daylight, viz. that the daily crimes of the Congo were the result, not of individual madness, but the inevitable consequence of a system whose starting-point was the negation of the most elementary principles of law and humanity. I had not the common sense at first to recognize . . . that to refuse to allow the natives to dispose fully of the produce of the soil conferred upon them by nature was to reduce them to slavery, because, without profit to themselves, they would refuse to work, and would therefore be compelled to do so by violence by their taskmasters."

An interesting statement was made on the same occasion by M. Felicien Challaye. M. Challaye had been a

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter XIV.

member of the mission of enquiry under de Brazza, which the French Government had despatched to the French Congo to investigate the working of the concessionaire system there.<sup>3</sup> Addressing the assembled guests, he explained how, when actually in the French Congo engaged in the enquiry, he had "read for the first time the writings of Mr. Morel," and how "as I read them a strong light seemed to electrify my mind. It suddenly came over me by what powerful links, progress, happiness and even the preservation of the native races, are intimately bound up with freedom of commerce."

### Mr. Brailsford's Judgment.

The whole position has also been described very clearly by Mr. H. N. Brailsford in *The War of Steel and Gold*.<sup>4</sup>

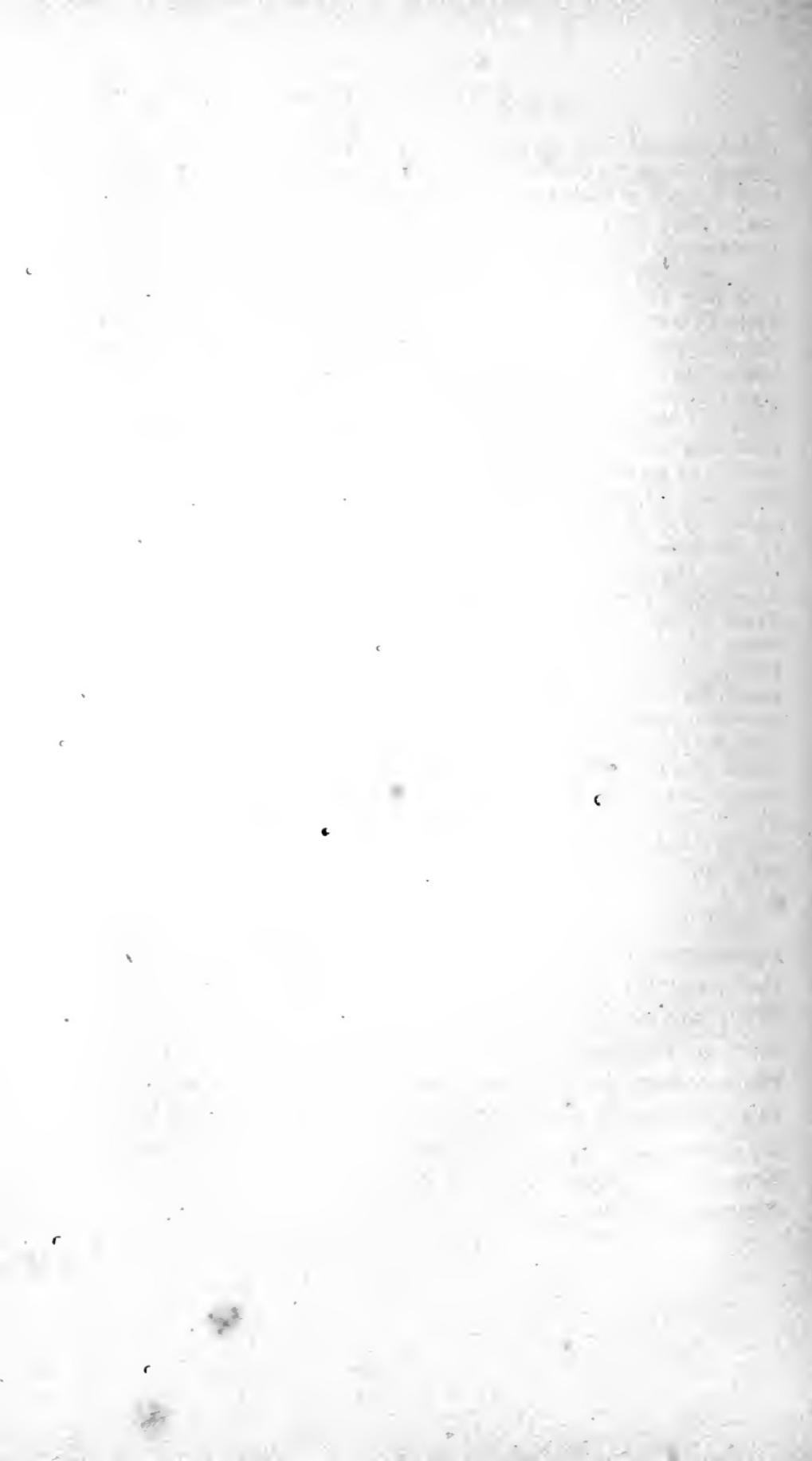
"The originators of this movement," says Mr. Brailsford, "and its supporters in the Churches and in Parliament, were, of course, entirely disinterested. They would undoubtedly have worked with exactly the same self-sacrificing zeal if no question of traders' rights had been involved. They were thinking solely of the miseries of the natives, whom King Leopold and his financiers exploit. . . . But this movement would never have attained the success which was won, nor would it have impressed itself to such a degree upon the Foreign Office, had it confined itself to humanitarian arguments. Its devoted originator, Mr. E. D. Morel, was wise enough to lay stress on the commercial argument, and to seek the support of the Chambers of Commerce. It secured the attention of the Foreign Office, partly because its programme included a demand for better facilities for British trade. The whole Congo affair is a perfect illustration of the main thesis of Liberal Foreign Policy—that free trade in goods is an interest consistent with humanity. The beginning and end of Congo misrule consisted in this—that a group of Belgian financiers, with King Leopold at its head, carved out this vast territory with domains and concession areas. In each of these the King or the companies enjoyed a monopoly. They did not trade, for there was no exchange of goods. They spent a

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter IX.

<sup>4</sup> *The War of Steel and Gold*, by H. N. Brailsford (G. Bell & Sons), second edition, pp. 69–71.

certain capital upon river gunboats, the building of stations and railways, and the arming of the savage native levies. In return, they claimed as their own the land and its produce (that is to say, the rubber), and, under the guise of a labour tax, set the natives to gather it. This was not trade; it was high Imperialist finance in a peculiarly brutal form. Incidentally, they excluded from their monopoly areas all foreign traders, and indeed there was no possibility of trade, since nothing was left for the natives to sell. The only thing they could have sold was the rubber, and this was appropriated by the financiers in Belgium. The standpoint of the Liverpool merchant was an entirely proper one. He is a trader and a shipper. He wanted to do business with the Congo natives as he does with the natives of the Gold Coast. He would have exported cottons in return for rubber. The Belgian monopoly stood in his way, and he argued fairly enough (1) that the monopoly was a breach of treaty rights, and (2) that its consequences were hideous to the natives themselves. One need not enquire what was the relative importance of the two issues to the Foreign Office and to Liverpool. The point to note is that in pursuing a traditional Free Trade Policy, and in backing British trading interests, the Foreign Office was really serving the cause of the natives. They could not become prosperous or free until they were delivered from this monopoly; incidentally, their prosperity and freedom would benefit our West African trade. Here the essential antagonism between the financier who uses his capital to exploit native labour and the trader who uses his capital to develop a system of exchange between natives and Europeans stands clearly revealed. Neither the trader nor the financier is disinterested. But the interests of the one are as consistent with those of the native as the interests of the other are inimical to them."

And so Morel, by his clear, far-seeing, business-like arguments, brought to the support of the Humanitarians the powerful influence of the Chambers of Commerce. With this double aid, he fought the great political and financial interests which were opposed to him, he forced the reluctant hands of an apathetic Foreign Office, and, in face of public indifference, private hostility, and official hesitation and circumlocution, he carried the banner of Free Trade, Equal Commercial Opportunity and Native Rights, to victory.



*PART II*

**THE FIGHT AGAINST SLAVERY**



## CHAPTER VI

### THE CONGO FREE STATE

The Brussels Conference of 1876—Stanley discovers the Congo—The International Congo Association—The Berlin Conference of 1884–5—Free Trade the Charter of the Free State—The natives deprived of their lands—King Leopold's infamous edicts—Slavery under a new guise.

IT is now necessary to give in a summarized form a short history of the Congo Free State and an account of those conditions, created by the policy of the late King Leopold, which led to Morel taking the action he subsequently did. In doing this, Morel's own words will be used as far as possible.<sup>1</sup>

On September 12, 1876, Leopold II, King of the Belgians, invited an International Conference to Brussels "to consider the best means which could be devised in order to open up Central Africa to European civilization."<sup>2</sup> Delegates were sent to this Conference by Belgium, Great Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Russia, and the King "was careful to assure the assembled explorers and scientists . . . of the absolute disinterestedness of his intentions. The upshot of the Conference

<sup>1</sup> For the historical side of the question the following works may be consulted : *The Life of Lord Granville, 1815–91*, by Lord Edmond Fitz-maurice (Longman & Co.) ; *The Life of Sir Charles Dilke*, by Stephen Curzon and Gertrude Tuckwell (John Murray) ; *The Colonization of Africa*, by Sir Harry Johnston (Cambridge Historic Series) ; *La Belgique et le Congo*, by Emile Vandervelde (Paris, Felix Alcan).

<sup>2</sup> *Affairs of West Africa*, p. 314.

was the creation of an 'International Association for the Exploration and Civilization of Africa,' of which King Leopold naturally assumed the presidency."<sup>3</sup>

A year or so later, the famous American explorer, H. M. Stanley, having travelled across the Dark Continent, suddenly emerged at the mouth of the Congo, first "revealing to the world the existence and course of that mighty river."<sup>4</sup> "King Leopold, realizing the immense importance of the discovery, . . . hastened to get in touch with the great explorer, whose services he succeeded in enlisting."<sup>5</sup> Stanley went out on behalf of the Association in 1879, and again in 1882, founding posts and making treaties with the native chiefs "all along the banks of the river and its affluents."<sup>6</sup>

On April 22, 1884,<sup>7</sup> the United States of America recognized the Association, the title of which had now been changed to that of the "International Congo Association," as an "independent state," but certain complications having arisen with France, Portugal, and Great Britain, Prince Bismarck suggested "a Conference of the Powers, in order to set at rest the rivalries which had arisen in the Congo Basin,"<sup>8</sup> and, indeed, "to consider the future of the African continent."<sup>9</sup>

### The Berlin Conference.

This important Conference met at Berlin on November 15, 1884, and concluded its sittings on February 26, 1885. It elaborated a series of principles for regulating European

<sup>3</sup> *King Leopold's Rule in Africa*, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Africa and the Peace of Europe* (National Labour Press, 1917), p. 31. For the nature of these treaties see *Great Britain and the Congo*.

<sup>7</sup> *Great Britain and the Congo*, p. 40.

<sup>8</sup> *Affairs of West Africa*, p. 317.

<sup>9</sup> *Africa and the Peace of Europe*, p. 32.

policy generally in tropical Africa. From it "there blossomed the Congo Free State,"<sup>10</sup> and one of the results of its deliberations was the "General Act of the Conference of Berlin," which was signed by the Powers collectively and "became the charter of the new State's existence."<sup>11</sup>

The two vital clauses of this Act were Articles 1 and 5.<sup>12</sup> Article 1 declared:—

"The trade of all nations shall enjoy complete freedom."

Article 5 laid it down that—

"No Power which exercises, or shall exercise, sovereign rights in the above-mentioned regions shall be allowed to grant therein a monopoly or favour of any kind in matters of trade.

"Foreigners without distinction shall enjoy protection of their persons and property, as well as the right of acquiring and transferring movable and immovable possessions, and national rights and treatment in the exercise of their professions."<sup>13</sup>

"Taken together," says Morel, "the two articles provided a double guarantee of the most solemn and definite character."<sup>14</sup>

### Dispossessing the Native.

On August 1, 1885, King Leopold notified the Powers that the International Congo Association, which had been described in an "Exchange of Declarations" between the Association and the British Government in the previous December as having been "founded by His

<sup>10</sup> *Africa and the Peace of Europe*, p. 32.

<sup>11</sup> *King Leopold's Rule in Africa*, p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Article 7 is also important. It runs as follows: "All the Powers exercising sovereign rights or influence in the aforesaid territories bind themselves to watch over the preservation of the native tribes and to care for the improvement of the conditions of their moral well-being, and to help in suppressing slavery, and especially the slave trade" (see *King Leopold's Rule in Africa*, p. 6).

<sup>13</sup> *The British Case in French Congo*, pp. 29-40.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* p. 41.

Majesty the King of the Belgians for the purpose of promoting the civilization and commerce of Africa, and for other humane and benevolent purposes,"<sup>15</sup> would henceforth be known as the Congo Free State, with himself as Sovereign of that State. In this manner the King became "the ruler of a million square miles of territory in Central Africa."<sup>16</sup> A month previously, however (i.e. in July 1885), King Leopold "issued a decree whereby the State asserted rights of proprietorship over all vacant lands throughout the Congo territory. It was intended that the term "vacant lands" should apply in the broadest sense to lands not actually occupied by the natives. . . . By successive decrees, promulgated in 1886, 1887, and 1888, the King reduced the rights of the natives to their lands to the narrowest limits, with the result that the whole of the odd 1,000,000 square miles assigned to the Congo State, except such infinitesimal proportions thereof as were covered by native villages or native farms, became *terres domaniales*."<sup>17</sup>

In the meantime enormous export duties were imposed on trade from the Congo, these duties aggregating as much as £50,000 in a year's export trade of £175,000.<sup>18</sup>

Although the Berlin Act had not forbidden the imposition of export duties, it had laid it down that no import duties should be established in the mouth of the Congo for twenty years.

"But in 1890 King Leopold, alleging the heavy expenses to which he had been put by the campaign against the Arabs in the Upper Congo, applied for permission to levy import duties."<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *King Leopold's Rule in Africa*, p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> *Affairs of West Africa*, p. 318.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p. 323.

<sup>18</sup> *King Leopold's Rule in Africa*, p. 18.

<sup>19</sup> *Affairs of West Africa*, p. 318.

### The Edicts of 1891 and 1892.

As a result of this request, representatives of the Powers met at Brussels and granted the King the permission he desired, "merely reserving to themselves the right to revert to the original arrangement in fifteen years."<sup>20</sup>

The international position of the Congo Free State being thus greatly strengthened, Leopold went a step farther. He issued a series of decrees or edicts

"by which the produce of the land was declared to be the property of the Government; the natives who collected it for sale to the white man, denounced as poachers upon the property of others; the white man who bought it, denounced as a receiver of stolen goods and threatened with condign punishment."<sup>21</sup>

Thus, with a stroke of the pen, King Leopold abolished the rights of the natives to the land and its products; thus he swept away their liberty, and the liberty of others, to trade in rubber and ivory; thus he reduced a population of millions of free men and women to virtual slavery; thus he arrogated to himself and his friends the absolute ownership of the vast wealth of the whole of the Congo basin—with the exception of a very small portion, known as the Lower Congo, around the mouth of the river.

And having thus acquired this immense territory, henceforward to be known as the *Domaine Privé*, the King proceeded to divide it into a number of districts, which were farmed out to various trusts and Concession-

<sup>20</sup> *Affairs of West Africa*, p. 318.

<sup>21</sup> *Great Britain and the Congo*, p. 78. One circular issued by the officials of the Congo (February 14, 1892) forbade the natives to collect either ivory or rubber unless they brought the articles to the State's officers, and added that "merchants purchasing such articles from the natives, whose right to collect them the State only recognized provided that they were brought to it, would be looked upon as receivers of stolen goods, and denounced to the judicial authorities" (*Affairs of West Africa*, pp. 324-5).

aire Companies. The most important of these districts were "the Domaine de la Couronne," which was administered as a Royal preserve, the Katanga Trust, the Mongalla Trust, the Lopori-Maringa Trust, and the Kasai Trust, and these were misgoverned and exploited in the manner afterwards exposed, to the horror of the civilized world, by the Congo Reform Association and E. D. Morel.

## CHAPTER VII

### FIRST SUSPICIONS

Journeys to Antwerp and Brussels—Rumours of “atrocities” in Congo  
—Studying the evidence—Gruesome stories—Curzon defends the  
Free State Administration—Morel looks into the trade statistics.

WE left Morel, at the end of Chapter III, the chief of the Congo Department of Messrs. Elder Dempster & Co., a leading authority on West Africa, a voluminous writer for the Press, with connections with many important newspapers, an ardent worker for better relations between France and Britain, a convinced and enthusiastic supporter of Free Trade, the Open Door, and Native Rights, and Sir Alfred Jones's right-hand man on the political side of all West African affairs.

This was in 1898, six or seven years after the promulgation of the Leopoldian edicts recorded in the previous chapter, and Morel, still little more than a youth, was twenty-five years of age.

During his frequent visits to Antwerp and Brussels on the company's business, Morel naturally had many opportunities of discussing Congolese affairs, and was constantly thrown into contact with people connected with the Congo Free State administration ; and, gradually, from words dropped casually in business conversations, snatches of talk overhead on the quays and in Government offices, and direct tales of “atrocities” told by men who had formerly traded with the Congo, he began to wonder

whether it could be possible that "something was wrong" somewhere, and whether matters were not being concealed which ought to be disclosed.

### Studying the Evidence.

Anyhow, the Congo was a West African subject, and ought to be studied. He began to study it; and first he turned to what British publications he could find on the matter. In 1896 the Aborigines Protection Society had made an appeal to the British Government on behalf of the natives of the Congo—an appeal which fell on deaf ears—and in the spring of 1897 Sir Charles Dilke had brought the question before the House of Commons, and had suggested that the Government should take steps to convene an International Conference "with a view to the adoption and enforcement of further measures for securing equitable treatment of the natives of Africa.<sup>1</sup> The suggestion having been declined by the Government, the debate was followed by a public meeting, convened by the Aborigines Protection Society, at which speeches were delivered by Mr. John Morley, Mr. Leonard Courtney, and Sir Charles Dilke; and a Swedish missionary, named Sjoblom, made certain startling accusations against Congolese officials, charging them with committing atrocities upon the natives and forcing the latter to collect vast quantities of rubber on pain of death.

"If the rubber does not reach the full amount required," said the missionary, "the sentinels attack the natives; they kill some and bring the hands to the commissary. . . . Two or three days after a fight a dead mother was found with two of her children. The mother was shot and the right hand taken off. On one side was the elder child, also shot, and the right hand also taken off. On the other side was the younger child, with the right hand cut off,

<sup>1</sup> Amongst those who generally supported Sir Charles Dilke in the debate were Mr. Sydney Buxton (now Lord Buxton), Mr. John Burns, Mr. McKenna, and Sir George Baden-Powell.

but the child, still living, was resting against the dead mother's breast. . . . A sentinel passed our mission station, and a woman accompanied him, carrying a basket of hands. We counted eighteen right hands smoked . . . they belonged to men, women, and even children. . . . One of the soldiers told me, . . . 'The commissary has promised us if we bring plenty of hands he will shorten our service. I have brought in plenty of hands already, and I expect my time of service will soon be finished.' " <sup>2</sup>

All these speeches Morel read. He also read the stories of abominations committed in the Congo detailed by two American missionaries, Murphy <sup>3</sup> and Morrison.<sup>4</sup> He read the book entitled *The Fall on the Congo Arabs*, by Captain Hinde, a British officer, temporarily in King Leopold's service, which contained the appalling allegation that European officers commanding Leopold's levies in the campaign against the Arabs of the Upper Congo had, in fact, commanded an army "fed for long periods by organized cannibalism," <sup>5</sup> a condition of things which Sir Charles Dilke had brought to the attention of a startled House of Commons. He read the writings of Mr. H. R. Fox-Bourne, the secretary of the Aborigines Protection Society; the diary of Mr. E. J. Glave, a well-known traveller, once associated with Stanley, published in 1896 after his death, in the *Century Magazine*; and the White Book on the Stokes Affair.<sup>6</sup> And these speeches and

<sup>2</sup> See *King Leopold's Rule in Africa*, pp. 111-112.

<sup>3</sup> The Rev. J. B. Murphy of the American Baptist Union, who, in a statement which appeared in *The Times* (November 18, 1895) gave an instance of "hands of men, women and children" being "placed in rows" "before a commissary," who counted them to see that the soldiers had not wasted cartridges.

<sup>4</sup> The Rev. W. M. Morrison.

<sup>5</sup> See *The Life of Sir Charles Dilke*.

<sup>6</sup> C8276 (Africa, No. 8, 1896). In 1896 Henry Stokes, a British trader in the Congo, was arrested and shot without trial by order of Major Lothaire, a Belgian officer in the employ of King Leopold. Stokes was accused of selling guns to the Arabs with whom the Congo State was at war (see above). But "this," say the authors of *The Life of Sir Charles Dilke*, "true or not, does not affect the initial outrage, that though he was entitled to a proper trial, he was trapped and summarily executed

statements certainly indicated to Morel that there was a considerable body of evidence in existence which pointed to the fact that there was something gravely wrong with the administration (at least on its African side) of the Congo Free State, and that gruesome atrocities were being perpetrated on an extensive scale in the mysterious interior of Central Africa. On the other hand, the Congo Government at Brussels had vehemently denied that there was the slightest scintilla of truth in these stories at all, and the British Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mr. George Nathaniel Curzon (the present Earl Curzon), had defended the administration of the State in the House of Commons against the attack of Sir Charles Dilke. The evidence up to that moment was clearly insufficient.

### The Trade Statistics.

And then Morel turned to the line of investigation which he subsequently pursued with such extraordinary effect. *He examined the trade statistics of the Congo.* No one who had criticized the Free State for its treatment of the natives had apparently thought of doing this before. No one before Morel had seen any connection between the exports and imports of the Congo and the question of the natives. No one had conceived that the two things

without trial of any kind." Speaking at the Pembroke Chapel, Liverpool, on April 12, 1906, Morel said of this case :—

(Stokes) ". . . was arrested by a commandant of the Congo Forces, upon whom had been conferred judicial power. He was arrested as he entered the tent of that Congolese Commandant as an invited guest. He was tried in the evening, without counsel, without assistance—a mock trial; and in the morning, before dawn, he was taken out and hanged. Speaking eighteen months ago, in the House of Commons, Lord Fitzmaurice, now Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, said that Stokes was 'murdered,' and used these words: 'His blood still cries out from the ground.' Such was the fate of an Englishman who came to loggerheads with the Congo State." (See also the Rabinek Case, p. 88 and seq.)

could have any bearing on each other. But Morel, as a business man, an economist, and a Free Trader, knew that there was a profound connection between the two. He knew that legitimate trade meant an exchange of goods, that exports must be paid for by imports. He knew that if the statistics showed that there was no such exchange of goods, that valuable commodities were being exported from the Congo and nothing sent in exchange, then the natives were certainly being robbed and exploited. It was from this practical business side that Morel approached the matter. He looked into the figures, and these figures absolutely appalled him; for they showed him, beyond a shadow of doubt, that a gigantic wrong was being committed.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CERTAINTY

Imports and exports—Morel's great discovery—An irresistible argument—Robbing the natives—Concealed cargoes—Profiteering *in excelsis*—Rule by ball-cartridge—The Sultan of Central Africa—Twenty million slaves—Attitude of Sir Alfred Jones—Phantom reforms—The Anversoise scandals—Morel's articles in the *Speaker*—Letter from Sir Charles Dilke—Severs connection with Messrs. Elder Dempster's—Testimonial from colleagues—A malicious falsehood.

BROADLY speaking, the trade statistics of an undeveloped, or partially developed, tropical African colony should show an excess of imports over exports.

The reason for this is as follows :—

Certain products of the colony are exported to Europe. These are paid for by "trade goods" imported. Over a term of years, therefore, these two sets of figures should roughly balance.

But, in addition to the goods imported to pay for the goods exported, there is usually a considerable importation of material and stores for the administrative staff, the military forces, and for public works ; and this, of course, should cause the figures of the imports to overtop those of the exports.

#### Morel's Discovery.

Now in the Congo there was a considerable administrative staff. There was an army of nearly 20,000 regular troops, and many thousands of irregular levies as well. There were two lines of railway, and a third under

construction, all requiring large importations of material. There was a fleet of more than forty steamboats on the river, also constantly requiring material for repairs, spare parts, chains, and so on. And there was an enormous number of military and other stations, for which material was constantly required.<sup>1</sup> Therefore the imports into the Congo should have been vastly greater than the exports from that State. *But on looking into the figures Morel found that the position was just the reverse.*<sup>2</sup> Not only did the exports greatly exceed the imports, but something like 80 per cent. of the latter consisted of goods which had nothing to do with trade purposes. Thus, although the Congo was exporting vast and increasing

<sup>1</sup> See *King Leopold's Rule in Africa*, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> In *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* Morel prints some interesting statistics of the imports and exports of British and French West African Colonies, comparing them with the trade returns of the Free State. From these we extract the following, which will serve to illustrate the point :—

	Imports (1899-1902).	Exports.
Sierra Leone (British) ..	£2,024,526 (less Special Colonial Stores)	£1,127,395
Gold Coast (British) ..	£5,594,366 (less Specie)	£3,176,527
Senegal (French) ..	199,144,302 francs	120,246,709 francs
Dahomey (French) ..	60,413,425 francs	49,623,215 francs
Congo Free State ..	£3,529,317	£7,360,130

These figures in themselves were sufficiently striking. But Morel pointed out that they were even more striking than they looked ; for out of the £3,529,317 worth of imports into the Congo he calculated that £2,636,000 worth consisted of goods imported for administrative needs and for the purpose of paying the soldiers and hired native labour. Deducting this sum, it appeared that £7,360,130 worth of exports (£6,146,973 worth representing rubber alone) were "paid for" by £893,317 worth of imports !

quantities of rubber and ivory, *the natives in return were getting practically nothing*, either for their products, or for their labour in collecting them. This meant—

“Firstly, that the natives were being robbed. Secondly, as they certainly couldn’t be expected to work for nothing voluntarily, that they were being enslaved.”

This, stated in a few words and in its simplest form, was the great discovery made by Morel. The argument was irresistible. There was no escape from it. Supported as it was by direct evidence of the most varied nature, it carried conviction to Morel’s own mind; and in the course of the next few years it was, in spite of fierce and enraged opposition from the threatened interests, to carry conviction to the world.<sup>3</sup>

### Immense Profits.

Pursuing his investigations farther, Morel made several other important discoveries.

He found, on examining the ships’ manifests, that large quantities of rubber and ivory shipped from the Congo in the Elder Dempster liners were not included in the statistics issued by the Congo Government at all. More was being exported than was included in the returns. The State Government and the concessionaires were getting far more out of the Congo than they allowed the public to know.

He found also that some of the companies which were controlling vast areas of Congo territory were making immense profits—so immense, in fact, that shares which were nominally worth about £20 apiece were changing hands at anything from £800 to £1,000 per share, whilst shareholders were receiving dividends bringing in from

<sup>3</sup> See Sir Charles Dilke’s letter, p. 52.

300 to 800 per cent. on their investments. Many of these companies, too, through their directorates, were apparently intimately connected with King Leopold and high officials of his Court.<sup>4</sup>

### Rule by Ball-cartridge.

Thirdly, throwing a lurid and sinister light on the methods by which the natives were being forced to work for nothing, he discovered that the steamers trading with the Congo were regularly shipping to Africa extraordinary quantities of ball-cartridge and thousands of rifles and other lethal weapons.

And fourthly, after studying the official documents bearing on the matter, he found that under the so-called Constitution of the Free State the millions of natives inhabiting the Congo had no legal rights or position at all. So far as the Congo was concerned King Leopold was an absolute monarch. No Tsar, no Roman Emperor, perhaps no Oriental Despot even, ever held powers so unlimited and so unrestrained. All executive and legislative functions centred in his hands. There was not even a Council of Ministers or a Grand Vizier to guide him. He made his own decisions, and from these decisions there was no appeal, and no redress. The Belgian Parliament had no control over the administration of the Congo. The King had supreme and autocratic power. With a flourish of his arm he could, if he so wished, decide the destiny and dispose of the lives of twenty millions of natives, inhabiting a territory about as large as the whole of Europe minus Russia, over which he ruled unchecked.

<sup>4</sup> Thus half of the shares of the "Société Anversoise du Commerce au Congo were owned by the King, its President was nominated by the King, and one of its three administrators was one of the King's aides-de-camp (see *Affairs of West Africa*, pp. 331-2).

"To me," said Mr. Richard Harding Davis, writing at a later date,<sup>5</sup> "the fact of greatest interest about the Congo is that it is owned, and the twenty million of people who inhabit it are owned, by one man. The land and its peoples are his private property. I am not trying to say that he governs the Congo. He does govern it, but that in itself would not be of interest. His claim is that he owns it. It does not sound like anything we have heard since the days of the Pharaohs. And the most remarkable feature of it is, that the man who makes this claim was placed over the Congo as a *Guardian.*"

### The "Speaker" Articles.

Having made these astounding discoveries, Morel's first action, naturally, was to lay their main outlines before his employer, in the hope that the latter might use his influence with King Leopold to redress these evils. Sir Alfred Jones was a strong man and an important one. Even if he failed to alter the system from within, as was indeed only too probable, he was a big enough man to have come out boldly against it—even at a temporary though heavy sacrifice of business interests<sup>6</sup>—and to have headed a successful agitation against the abomina-

<sup>5</sup> *The Congo and Coasts of Africa*, by Richard Harding Davis (Scribner's). Mr. Harding Davis visited the Congo for *Collier's Weekly*. In his book he paid the following tribute to Morel:—

"Mr. Morel," he wrote, "has many enemies. So, early in the nineteenth century, had the English abolitionists Wilberforce and Granville Sharp. After they were dead they were buried in the Abbey and their portraits were placed in the National Gallery. People who wish to assist in freeing twenty millions of human beings should to-day support Mr. Morel. It will be of better service than, after he is dead, burying him in Westminster Abbey."

<sup>6</sup> The contract with the Congo Free State held by Messrs. Elder Dempster & Co. was an extremely lucrative one, and might have been withdrawn by King Leopold. In fact, at a subsequent date the King did threaten to withdraw the contract unless the growing agitation could be damped down. Great pressure was brought to bear on Morel from various quarters to induce him to stop his campaign. But Morel was not amenable to pressure, and this naturally intensified the animosity of the powerful interests he had challenged and which were gathering against him.

tions which prevailed in the Congo. But it was not to be. On his return from a visit to Brussels he told Morel that the King had promised reforms and must be given time. But these promises, although doubtlessly made, were never carried out. Subsequent events showed that there had never been any intention of carrying them out. To plead for delay—whilst promising reform—has ever been a favourite weapon of those who would perpetuate abuses. So it was in this case. The abuses continued, the reforms never materialized. In fact, from the very nature of the case, they could not. The only possible reform was the abolition of the whole system. And it was upon the maintenance of the system that the King and his financiers depended for their colossal profits.<sup>7</sup> These scandals, with their shocking revelations of murder, mutilation, and profiteering, determined Morel. He could wait no longer. He sat down and penned a series of vigorous articles for the *Speaker*.<sup>8</sup> These articles were entitled “The Congo Scandal.” They were unsigned, and created a considerable sensation. Amongst others, they attracted the attention of the late Sir Charles Dilke, who communicated, through the editor, with their author, and thus started a connection between himself and Morel which only ceased with the former’s death in 1911. An

<sup>7</sup> The Société Anversoise du Commerce au Congo possessed a capital of 1,700,000 francs, divided into 3,400 shares of 500 francs. Of these shares, one half belonged to the Congo State, i.e. to the King. The net profits of the Company for the four years 1897-1900 were 7,275,838 francs. In March 1900 the 500-franc shares of the Company stood as high as 13,730 francs, which meant that the King’s holding was worth over 23,000,000 francs, or roughly £933,000. King Leopold had conferred upon this Company some 12,000 square miles of Congo territory, and in the year of which we are speaking “one or two of its agents,” said Morel, had “confessed to killing, by order, 150 natives, cutting off 60 hands, crucifying women and children, and impaling the sexual remains of slaughtered males on the stockade of the villages whose inhabitants were slow in gathering rubber.” These scandals were first revealed to the world in the Belgian Press (see *Affairs of West Africa*, pp. 331-33).

<sup>8</sup> Now the *Nation*.

interesting reference is made to these articles in the *Life of Sir Charles Dilke*, by Stephen Curzon and Gertrude Tuckwell. Dealing with Dilke's action on the Congo question, the authors say :—

" So well was the secret of those dark places kept that even he, with his widespread net of acquaintance in many capitals, found facts hard to gather ; and he was naturally attracted by the appearance in 1900 of a series of anonymous articles in the *Speaker* which dealt with the system set up in the Congo, and its inevitable results. These articles displayed an unusual knowledge of the whole complicated subject, and revealed aspects of it which had previously baffled enquiry. The writer proved to be Mr. E. D. Morel. So began a co-operation whose influence upon the administration of African races was destined to be far-reaching."

### Leaves Elder Dempster's.

But it was now clearly impossible for Morel to remain any longer at Messrs. Elder Dempster's. Owing to his views on the Congo, his visits to Antwerp had for some time been discouraged, and the whole situation had gradually grown more and more strained and difficult. He determined, therefore, to leave, and having received a journalistic appointment, sent in his resignation, which was accepted with many expressions of regret and esteem.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> As it has been alleged by some of Morel's opponents that he was "dismissed" from the employment of Messrs. Elder Dempster & Co., or that he left that firm "suddenly"—the suggestion being that there was something discreditable about his departure—it is necessary to state that on leaving, in the circumstances related above, he was presented by his colleagues with a handsome testimony of their goodwill, the gift being accompanied by a testimonial, signed by the manager, Mr. John Craig, which read as follows :—

" May 1, 1901.

" On behalf of your old colleagues and staff of Messrs. Elder Dempster & Co., I beg you to accept the accompanying presents as a souvenir and mark of the high appreciation they have always had for you during the time they have had the pleasure of being associated with you in the office, and I take this opportunity to tender you their heartiest good wishes for your future welfare and success."

Some years later in view of the foregoing allegations, Morel took the precaution of getting letters both from Sir Alfred Jones and Mr. John

And so Morel, having severed a ten years' connection with the famous Liverpool shipping firm, went out, like some modern Giant-killer, to destroy the evil which was overshadowing the lives of millions of natives, and making the vast Congo Basin "Darkest Africa" indeed.

Craig (who had by then become a partner in the firm) denying the statement that he had been "dismissed." Mr. Craig in his letter expressed "much regret to hear you have been caused any annoyance by such a rumour as that you mention," whilst Sir Alfred Jones wrote to say "it is not right for any one to say that you were dismissed. You were not." These letters, which Morel still possesses, are dated respectively December 23, and December 30, 1907.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE CAMPAIGN OPENS

Hawarden days—*The Sierra Leone Hut Tax Disturbances*—The position in the French Congo—Forty-four Concessionaire Companies—British trading rights affected—A Heaven-sent opportunity—Mr. John Holt of Liverpool—Chambers of Commerce petition—Lord Lansdowne—*Trading Monopolies in West Africa*—Morel on Free Trade and Native Rights—How a Slave State is created—The root of the evil—A “blood-stained” structure—Belgium must control the Congo—Call for an International Conference—A campaign in two languages—French and Belgian support.

IN 1901 Morel had taken a small house at Hawarden, a village on the Welsh borders imperishably associated with the name of William Ewart Gladstone; and it was there, amidst pleasantly rural surroundings, that for the next few years he worked, only coming up to London on important occasions, and mainly conducting his campaign—and this is one of the most astonishing points about it—by correspondence. Indeed, it is this habit of seclusion, practised by him for so long, his distaste for what is called Society, and his reluctance, owing to his retiring disposition and his strong affection for country life, to come out into the limelight and to move in person amongst the well-known figures of contemporary life, which has enabled some of his opponents to picture him as “a man of mystery” and a “sinister figure lurking in the background,” and to invest this downright, somewhat unaccommodating man with the attributes of a Machiavelli or a Drury Lane conspirator.

A friend of Morel's, Captain Hazzeldine, who was associated with him on the *African Mail*, has given an interesting glimpse of these Hawarden days :—

" He (Morel) had just got back from work to the bosom of his family in the village home in Cheshire.<sup>1</sup> His small boy and girl were playing in the garden under Mrs. Morel's eye. There was also a baby donkey—a live one. This little big-headed creature, standing about as high as they did, was tumbling the children about on the grass. I said, ' What do you have that for ? Won't it hurt them ? ' He said, ' No, it will do them good. It will give the kid pluck. It will get him used to animals, so that he won't be afraid of them.' "

In 1900 Morel had published a small pamphlet—which won the approval of the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Liverpool Journal of Commerce*—in which he condemned the enforcement of the hut tax upon the natives of Sierra Leone,<sup>2</sup> and in the following year he opened in real earnest his campaign against the concessionaire system in tropical Africa.

By this time this pernicious system had spread over the borders of the Congo Free State into the French Congo, and great trouble had resulted.

### The Position in the French Congo.

This colony had been acquired by France largely owing to the efforts of Savorgnan de Brazza, one of the greatest colonial statesmen that France had ever produced, and a man who had won the confidence and affection of the natives to a very remarkable degree. The territory, however, had been somewhat neglected by the French, and its trade was almost entirely in British hands.

But in 1898 the enormous profits secured by the Rubber Companies in the Congo Free State had aroused the

<sup>1</sup> This was in 1904.

<sup>2</sup> *The Sierra Leone Hut Tax Disturbances: a Reply to Mr. Stephen*, by E. D. M. (John Richardson & Sons, Liverpool).

cupidity of a certain group of French colonial politicians and financiers, and King Leopold on his part had not been slow to realize that his own position would be enormously strengthened if the system prevalent in the Congo were buttressed by the introduction of a similar state of affairs into a colony administered by France.

And so in this year the French Congo was split up amongst forty-four Concessionaire Companies "with nominal French heads, but with Belgians on the board of administration, a majority of Belgian shareholders behind, with Belgian capital either openly, or in disguised form, the controlling factor."<sup>3</sup>

The natural results followed. Disputes took place between the concessionaires and the British merchants who had for years been trading peacefully with the natives. The concessionaires claimed that the produce of the soil was their own property, and that therefore the merchants had no right to trade with the natives at all. In this claim they were established on March 20, 1901, by a decree, issued through the Governor of the French Congo, which declared that "the products of the soil belonged to the concessionaires, who alone had the right to dispose of them, the natives not being entitled to sell them to any one but the concessionaires."<sup>4</sup>

This decree evoked from de Brazza, then in retirement, a strong and dignified protest in *Le Temps*. It was also opposed by other eminent Frenchmen. Nevertheless it was persisted in. British merchants were forcibly prevented from trading. British goods were seized on the public roads. British factories were broken open. British native agents were flogged. British subjects were expelled. And, as a consequence, trading stations were deserted, and a profitable commerce which had been

<sup>3</sup> *Affairs of West Africa*, p. 288.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 292.

gradually built up during twenty years and more was being rapidly destroyed.

Morel saw in this situation a Heaven-sent opportunity of opening a formidable attack upon the whole Leopoldian system and the evils which logically sprang from it. Getting in touch with Mr. John Holt, of Messrs. John Holt & Co.—one of the two important British firms which were mainly affected<sup>5</sup>—he persuaded him to bring the matter officially before the Liverpool Chambers of Commerce.<sup>6</sup> As a result, an influential joint memorial from nine Chambers of Commerce (including those of London, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Cardiff, and Bristol) was despatched on September 30, 1901, to Lord Lansdowne, His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the memorialists taking their stand on the Free Trade provisions of the Berlin Act of 1885, which forbade the granting of any trade monopoly in the basin of the Congo.<sup>7</sup>

### **"Trading Monopolies in West Africa."**

In the autumn of the same year, Morel contributed a series of articles to the weekly journal *West Africa*. These articles, five in number, were reprinted in pamphlet form under the title of *Trading Monopolies in West Africa*,<sup>8</sup> were widely reviewed both in this country and on the

<sup>5</sup> The other firm was Messrs. Hatton & Cookson.

<sup>6</sup> Mr. John Holt had at first been reluctant to take this action, firstly owing to a personal dislike of publicity, and secondly because he preferred to rely mainly on private negotiations through the Foreign Office. Morel, however, with his eye on the still greater iniquity of the Congo Free State, persuaded him that, in the wider interests of humanity, it was necessary to arouse public opinion on the whole question, and to mobilize the interests of legitimate commerce in support of the general Humanitarian movement.

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter V.

<sup>8</sup> *Trading Monopolies in West Africa: a Protest against Territorial Concessions*, by E. D. M. (John Richardson & Sons, Liverpool).

Continent, and gave rise to a considerable amount of controversy, especially in Belgium.

In this pamphlet Morel developed at some length his well-known views on the subject of Free Trade, Native Rights, and Forced Labour. "Free Trade For All," he proclaimed, was his ideal.

"Free Trade in West Africa, free trade for all ; free trade for the Englishmen in a French colony, and in a German colony ; free trade for the Frenchmen in the colonies of his neighbours ; an assimilation of tariffs ; mutual co-operation in promoting legitimate trade, the greatest of all civilizing agents ; mutual co-operation in curtailing the liquor traffic, which is opposed to the interests of the European Governments, of the merchants, of the natives. There is plenty of room for the free, unfettered commerce of all the Powers of Europe in the Western Continent of Africa, and the greater the attractions given to the trade in an individual colony, whether it be French or German or English, the sounder its financial position, the more pronounced its ability to construct useful public works, the more certain the contentment and the producing power of its inhabitants." 9

### How a Slave State is Created.

Of the concessionaire system he wrote :—

"With a stroke of the pen it debars the natives from hereditary and tribal ownership of land ; it ignores the native law of land tenure and the native form of family property. It confers on a group of Europeans the absolute ownership of tribal lands in Africa, and grants them the sole rights of proprietorship over the raw products of the soil. . . . The native is no longer asked to exchange his vegetable riches for imported goods, *because his possession of those vegetable riches is no longer recognized*. They are not his : they belong to the monopolist association, and he is expected to collect and bring them to the association of whom he has become the *de facto* serf, the association paying him for his labour on its own terms.

"The basis of such a regime can only be force, and to be even temporarily successful must everywhere necessitate the enrolling and arming, on a large scale, of mercenaries. Each association is therefore bound in time to become a Slave State, relying upon armed

<sup>9</sup> *Trading Monopolies in West Africa*, p. 35.

force to compel its subjects to work. That is the only logical outcome of the system, and we see it in the *Domaine Privé* of the Congo State.”<sup>10</sup>

### The Root of the Evil.

The last dozen words were characteristic. Never for a moment did Morel lose sight of his main object. Starting off with an examination of the conditions prevailing in the French Congo, he quickly developed his theme until it covered the Congo Free State as well. Here, as he clearly showed, was the root of the evil, of which the situation in the French colony was only an offshoot. For the Leopoldian regime he reserved his fiercest invective. “The rubber shipped home by the Congo companies . . . is stained with the blood of hundreds of negroes.” “This hideous structure of sordid wickedness,” he called it. “Blood is smeared all over the Congo State, its history is blood-stained, its deeds are bloody, the edifice it has reared is cemented with blood—the blood of unfortunate negroes, spilled freely with the most sordid of all motives, monetary gain: blood which calls aloud to Heaven for retribution upon the shedders of it.”

“The system must be changed,” he declared, “and the only way to change it is the abolition of the *Domaine Privé* and the substitution of Belgian parliamentary supervision for the despotism of the man who has brought all these horrors upon Central Africa.”<sup>11</sup>

Finally, he called for an International Conference to enquire into “the whole problem of the relationship between the peoples of Europe and the peoples of Africa.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Trading Monopolies in West Africa*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* p. 58.

<sup>12</sup> For writing this pamphlet Morel subsequently received a letter of thanks from the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce.

### French and Belgian Support.

Morel has the good fortune to be bi-lingual. He can speak and write French as well as he can speak English. So he made use of this advantage by following up his pamphlet with a detailed exposure of the whole concessionnaire system in the French review *Question diplomatiques et Coloniales*, which attracted considerable attention across the Channel. And here it may be mentioned that Morel, in the attitude he was taking, was receiving, and continued to receive, strong support from well-known writers and politicians, not only in France, but also in Belgium.

Amongst those who took a similar line to his own were de Brazza himself,<sup>13</sup> whose protest has already been noted ; the powerful *Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale* ; M. Ballay, Governor-General of French West Africa, who threatened to resign his office if the concessionnaire system were extended to the other French West African colonies, and who declared that such a system required "a soldier behind every producer" ; M. Jean Hess, the well-known explorer ; M. Serge Barret ; M. Albert Cousin, "member of the Superior Council of the Colonies" ; M. Pierre Mille ; and in Belgium M. Lorand, leader of the Radical section of the Liberal Party, and a number of other deputies.

In presenting Morel with a copy of his book on *Native Policy in the French Colonies* (Paris : Bureaux de la France d'outre mer. 1912, "published with approval of the

<sup>13</sup> Many years later, in 1911, the Comtesse de Brazza, widow of this great African explorer and administrator, sent the following message to those who were making arrangements for the presentation of a public testimonial to Morel : "I admire greatly the perseverance, courage and energy with which Mr. E. D. Morel has pursued his work on behalf of the black race against European cruelty and oppression in Africa, and I shall be happy to join those of his friends who are about to give him a public testimonial as a tribute of appreciation for his noble work on behalf of the Congo natives. I am sorry to be detained in Algeria, and not to be able to be present on this occasion."

Ministry of the Colonies"), M. Henri Bobichon, a high official of the French Congo, who subsequently helped in the work of removing evil consequences resulting from the introduction of the Leopoldian system into that territory, inscribed the following words upon its title-page :—

"To him who has struggled so courageously on behalf of the Congo natives, Mr. E. D. Morel, with the sympathetic homage and devotion of an old Colonial."

## CHAPTER X

### TWO YEARS' HARD FIGHTING

First public speech—The Rabinek case—*Affairs of West Africa*—Sir Charles Dilke's opinion—Translated by French Colonial Office—Morel's second book—*The British Case in French Congo*—Commerce or exploitation?—A grave warning—Public support increasing—The first Parliamentary debate—British official action—Starts the *African Mail*—*The Congo Slave State*—An appeal to America.

EARLY in 1902 Morel was invited, through his work as a writer on West African questions, to become a member of the committee of the West African Section of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce,<sup>1</sup> and in May of the same year he made his first public speech at a meeting held at the Mansion House, under the auspices of the Aborigines Protection Society, with Mr. Alfred E. Pease, M.P., in the chair, supported by Sir Charles Dilke, M.P., Mr. James Round, M.P., Sir T. Fowell Buxton, Sir Alfred Lyall, Mr. H. R. Fox-Bourne, Mrs. J. R. Green, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, and others. The following is an extract from Morel's speech on this occasion :—

“ The Congo Free State has invented a form of slavery more degrading and more atrocious than any slavery which has existed before. They might disguise it as they liked ; they might wrap it up in as many sonorous platitudes and misleading sophistries as they chose. The fact remained that a State which by successive strokes of the pen alienated native ownership in land, declared a monopoly over the products of the soil, forebade the natives to dispose freely of those products, compelled the natives to bring

<sup>1</sup> He resigned this position two years later.

those products to itself as tribute, and was able to enforce these monstrous edicts by the only way in which, in tropical Africa, it was possible to enforce such a conception, namely by overwhelming military force, was guilty of having established slavery. . . . I do not think the position is one as to the number of specific acts of cruelty and oppression—the real question is as to the cause of which these atrocities are the effects. It is the cause itself which must be removed. . . . The Congo Free State, which claimed to be a philanthropic institution, has a regular army of 15,000 regular levees. The number is official. . . . It is of little or no consequence how many or how few records exist as to the specific acts of cruelty committed. What I contend is that the system itself infallibly necessitates and renders inevitable such acts, and it is upon a complete reversal of the system itself that efforts should be concentrated. Justice and humanity, reason and common sense, demand that the system which is eating into the vitals of Africa should be put a stop to. To ensure that result international enquiry is essential."

At this meeting resolutions were passed expressing the opinion that the provisions of the Berlin Conference "as regards the protection of native populations" had been violated "by proceedings ruinous to those native populations," and calling upon His Majesty's Government to confer with the signatory Powers to the Act to take steps "with a view to fulfilment of their joint obligations." It is perhaps worthy of note that the Congo State commissioned two of its friends to attend this meeting, and that these were responsible for several abortive interruptions.

In the March issue of the *Contemporary Review* there appeared an article by Morel entitled "The Belgian Curse in Africa," and a little later, largely through the influence of Mrs. John Richard Green, a short article entitled "The Congo State and the *Domaine Privé*" was inserted in the official journal of the African Society and attracted the favourable attention of high officials of the Foreign Office, one of whom was the late Sir Martin Gosselin. Both of these articles were subsequently reprinted as

pamphlets, for Morel, amongst his other qualities, is an indefatigable pamphleteer.

### The Rabinek Case.

The publication of the first of these articles had a remarkable sequel. Quite by accident a copy of the *Contemporary Review* in which it appeared fell into the hands of a European trader in the wilds of Central Africa, and through him Morel was furnished with the first particulars of the famous Rabinek Case, which he subsequently used with such startling effect. The facts of this case, which were not fully made known until the following year, were briefly as follows<sup>2</sup> :—

Gustave Maria Rabinek was an Austrian merchant of high integrity and unblemished character, trading in rubber and ivory in the Katanga region of the Congo Free State. He was well known to English explorers and merchants in Central Africa, and possessed a trading licence issued by two Congo State officials and by the Katanga Company, the latter agreement being signed on September 23, 1900. But on the previous June a convention had been signed in Brussels, by which the Katanga Company was converted from a more or less private trading concern into a State institution on the lines of the other trusts of the *Domaine Privé*.<sup>3</sup> The news of this arrangement did not reach the African manager of the Katanga Company until November 7th, six weeks after the licence had been granted to Rabinek.

Upon being informed of the agreement which had been made with Rabinek, the European directors of the Katanga Company immediately repudiated it, and the

<sup>2</sup> The particulars of this case are taken from *King Leopold's Rule in Africa*, pp. 259–96 (cf. the previous case of Stokes, Chapter VII).

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter VI.

letter conveying their decision reached Africa on April 11, 1901, and was communicated to Rabinek nine days later. Rabinek, however, declined to admit the validity of this repudiation. He had his agreement, and he meant to stick to it.

In the meantime (as far back as December 17, 1900) a warrant for Rabinek's arrest had been issued on the charge of violating the decree of October 30, 1892,<sup>4</sup> by which trading in rubber by private individuals was prohibited in the Katanga region "on pain of a fine of 10 to 1,000 francs, and to imprisonment of one day to a month."

"Had Rabinek been indicted on this charge alone," says Morel<sup>5</sup> "he could have got out of the clutches of the State, and made himself uncommonly unpleasant afterwards on the strength: first, of the Free Trade Clauses of the Berlin Act; second, of the official licences granted him, for which he had paid; and third, of the licence granted him by the Katanga Company, to benefit by which he opened a large credit with European firms."

So a secret charge of gun-running, which was never communicated to Rabinek, and for which there was no tittle of evidence, was apparently made against him as well!

On May 14, 1901, Rabinek was arrested on board the British steamer *Scotia*, anchored on Lake Muera, forty yards from the Congo State port of Mpueto. The warrant was read to him by an officer of the Free State, and Rabinek accompanied him ashore.

He was then removed to Mtowa, 150 miles away, and there on June 14th was summarily condemned by court-martial to one year's imprisonment and a fine of 1,000 francs for "illegal" trading in rubber—an absolutely illegal sentence from any point of view, even under the law under which he was charged, and one against which

<sup>4</sup> See p. 63.

<sup>5</sup> *King Leopold's Rule in Africa*, p. 280.

a judicial officer of the State, who attended the court-martial, himself protested.

Against this sentence Rabinek appealed, and was sent away, "a prisoner" under native escort, to Boma, a distance of 2,000 miles. "Such a journey," said M. Leveque, a high official of the Katanga Company, when he heard of it, "certainly means death." It meant death in this case; for on September 1st Rabinek died on the journey and was hastily buried on the river-bank, the body not even being taken to Leopoldville, two hours' steaming farther on. In the meantime all his effects, to the estimated value of £12,000, had been seized by the agents of the Katanga Company.

"In an abandoned clearing," wrote Morel, "where once stood a Government wooding-post, at the mouth of Stanley Pool, lies all that is left of Gustav Maria Rabinek. A grave hastily dug and roughly closed, the body flung there like a dog, with not even a stone to mark its resting-place—only the grim African forest mounting guard."<sup>6</sup>

Such was the famous Rabinek Case, which in the following year made such a stir throughout Europe, and the particulars of which Morel was instrumental in putting before the public.

### "Affairs of West Africa."

Towards the close of the year Morel issued his first important book, *Affairs of West Africa* (Heinemann, 1902), a volume of nearly four hundred pages, profusely illustrated with excellent photographs and maps.

This book contained a detailed and exhaustive description of West Africa, its history, its inhabitants, its flora and fauna, its physical characteristics, its industries, its trade and its finances, and revealed an amazing range

<sup>6</sup> *King Leopold's Rule in Africa*, p. 295.

of knowledge of the country for one who had at that time never even visited its shores. The greater part of the book dealt with Nigeria and other British West African possessions, but the concluding chapters contained a strong and measured attack upon the Leopoldian system in the Congo Free State, and upon the same system as applied in the French Congo, which was contrasted with the brilliant achievements and admirable administrative successes of the French in their other West African dependencies. Morel also, as stated in Chapters II and III, devoted several pages to a valuable plea for closer sympathy and understanding between the French and British peoples on the subject of West Africa.

The book was well reviewed. Sir Charles Dilke said that it constituted "the best reflection on the conditions of Africa" which had been produced "since that curious volume the *Dark Continent*." Sir Harry Johnston, writing in the *Daily Chronicle*, said of the Congo part that "Mr. Morel's indictment is one of the most terrible things ever written, if true." The *Times*, after saying,

"It is with great satisfaction that the public will welcome a contribution to our general knowledge on the subject, at once so intelligent and so informing, as Mr. E. D. Morel's,"

went on to remark that—

"The sufferings of which the picture was given to the world in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are as nothing to those which Mr. Morel represents to be the habitual accompaniments of the acquisition of rubber and ivory by the Belgian companies";

whilst the *Morning Post* characterized the book as being "a terrible indictment of the Congo State."

But the most flattering tribute to the book was that

paid to it by the French Government. Containing, as it did, the first serious study of French administrative work in West Africa which had appeared in this country, it was translated into French by the Head of the African Department of the French Colonial Office, M. Alfred Duchêne, printed in serial form in the Official Journal of that Department and afterwards published in book form by Challomel.<sup>7</sup>

To this edition M. Duchêne contributed an interesting introduction :—

“ When a few months ago,” he wrote, “ the work of Mr. Morel appeared in England, the few Frenchmen who became acquainted with it were at once astonished, charmed, saddened. . . . This conscientious writer had produced a most enlightened study of West Africa. His liberal mind had steered him away from prejudice ; whether the problem had to do with Mohammedanism, slavery, the qualities and defects of the negro race, he approached it in the light of facts. . . . For many Englishmen what Mr. Morel said in his volume upon the success of France in West Africa must have been a revelation, and more than one reader will rejoice to see an Englishman speak highly of the meritorious efforts of our fellow-countrymen. . . . But if the author refers in favourable terms to our work in West Africa proper, he is very severe upon our proceedings in the French Congo since 1899. Have we deserved these criticisms ? Mr. Morel is convinced of it, for he sees in the grant of large concessions in the French Congo and the economic system arising from them, a system which has been adopted from the Congo Free State whose methods he utterly condemns. . . . He does not admit that one is entitled to remain neutral in the face of doctrines which one blames and policies which one considers odious or arbitrary. . . . The object we have had has been, by translating the volume of Mr. Morel’s, to present to the French public a book in which the ability and scientific treatment of his subject by the author equals his unquestionable competence.”

Morel’s second book, *The British Case in French Congo* (Heinemann), appeared a few months later, in the spring of 1903. In this work, as the title indicated, he reverted

<sup>7</sup> *Problèmes de l’Ouest Africain.* Translated from the English by A. Duchêne, chief of the African Staff at the Ministry of the Colonies. (Paris : Augusten Challomel, 1904.)

to the state of affairs in the French Congo, and dealt with it very fully and with great lucidity. At the same time he again made it quite clear that in his opinion the root of the whole evil lay in the Congo Free State, and that he still retained a very real respect and admiration for French administration in Africa generally. The book was dedicated

"To all far-seeing Englishmen, and fair-minded Frenchmen,"

and in his Introduction Morel remarked :

"I am an earnest and sincere admirer of the splendid work accomplished by France in West Africa proper, and the magnificent labours of the de Brazza school in French Congo."<sup>8</sup>

### Commerce or Exploitation ?

The distinction between legitimate commerce and exploitation was clearly drawn :—

"The difference between commerce and exploitation—which is a polite way of describing robbery aggravated by violence—is the difference between approaching the owner of an article and offering to buy it from him, and putting a pistol to the owner's head, bidding him hand over his goods on pain of death or punishment of various kinds. The one is based upon consent ; the other upon compulsion. The one recognizes that the negro is (1) a man, (2) a landowner, whether as a unit in a tribal community or family organization, or as an individual. The other looks upon the negro as (1) a brute ; (2) denies his rights as a landowner ; (3) claims that the mountains, valleys, forests and plains, and everything of economic value they contain, whether animal, vegetable or mineral—except the actual spot upon which the native has built his hut, or where he cultivates his patch of maize millet or other foodstuffs—belongs, not to the native, but to the white man."<sup>9</sup>

He concluded with a grave warning :—

"Slavery, relying upon the rifles of thousands of native levies, or commerce, based upon the recognition that the negro has the

<sup>8</sup> *The British Case in French Congo* (Heinemann), p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 4-5.

rights of a man to his freedom and his property—that is what European statesmen will shortly be called upon to decide. And as they decide, so the structure which the white people are endeavouring once more to raise up in the land of the negroes will remain, or the great black wave—inscrutable, mysterious, enduring—will once more roll suddenly forward even unto the ocean, obliterating every trace of a civilization which, professing to act in the name of the Most High God, has permitted the violation of every law, human and Divine.”<sup>10</sup>

This book also was well received, the *Morning Post* in particular being loud in its praise.

During this period the Congo Government and its agents were not idle, and Morel, being recognized as a new and formidable opponent of the Leopoldian system, was the recipient of attacks from many quarters, actions for libel—which never materialized—were threatened, and he was even accused of being the agent of an “*International Syndicate working in the interests of France.*” On his part Morel was not letting the grass grow under his feet, and in pamphlet after pamphlet, and in innumerable articles and published letters, he pressed forward his case against the Congo with characteristic vigour and zeal. In particular he was now making known, through the Press, the facts—already related—he had laboriously pieced together concerning the notorious Rabinek Case. This case was taken up most vigorously by the *Morning Post*, to which journal Morel contributed several articles. Morel also placed these facts before the Foreign Office, with the result that Lord Lansdowne took certain official action on the matter.

### **Increasing Public Support.**

Public support was now rallying in considerable strength to the cause of the Congo Reformers. A book entitled *Civilization in Congo-land*, published in January 1903 by

<sup>10</sup> *The British Case in French Congo* (Heinemann), p. 11.

Mr. H. R. Fox-Bourne, secretary of the Aborigines Protection Society, reinforced, especially from the Humanitarian side, the case which Morel was presenting; resolutions censuring the methods of the Congo State were passed in succession by the Associated Chambers of Commerce, the Free Church Council, and the London Branch of the late Mr. W. T. Stead's "International Union"; and on May 5th an important meeting was held at the United Services Institute, at which the Rev. W. M. Morrison, an American missionary who had spent four years in the Congo, delivered an account of his experiences there, and of the infamous deeds he had witnessed. Dr. Clifford was the chairman of this meeting, and he was supported by Mr. Herbert Samuel, M.P., Mr. Alfred Emmott, M.P., Mr. T. R. Buchanan, M.P., Mr. C. McArthur, M.P., Mr. Frederic Harrison, Mr. John Holt, and others. The resolution, appealing to the Government to take action, was moved by Sir Charles Dilke, M.P., and seconded by Morel.

### The First Parliamentary Debate.

And then, on May 20, 1903, the matter came before the House of Commons. At the suggestion of Sir Charles Dilke, Morel drew up a resolution to be submitted to the House. It ran as follows:—

"That the Government of the Congo Free State, having, at its inception, guaranteed to the Powers that its native subjects should be governed with humanity, and that no trading monopoly or privilege should be permitted within its dominions (and both these guarantees having been constantly violated),<sup>11</sup> this House requests His Majesty's Government to confer with the other Powers signatory to the Berlin General Act, by virtue of which the Congo Free State exists, in order that measures may be adopted to abate the evils prevalent in that State."

<sup>11</sup> The words in parentheses were omitted, at the request of Mr. Balfour, from the resolution as carried by the House.

This resolution was moved by Mr. Herbert Samuel, supported by Sir Charles Dilke, Mr. Alfred Emmott, Sir John Gorst, and Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, and carried unanimously, Mr. Balfour, then Prime Minister, admitting that the Government

"could not, of course, in any case, resist the motion, because it indicated a policy the Government desired to follow."

In the course of this debate Morel's name was referred to by Sir Charles Dilke, Mr. Herbert Samuel, and Mr. Emmott in the highest terms, and the references were warmly cheered. He was described as the man who knew more about the subject than any one else, and to whom great gratitude was due.

### **British Official Action.**

As a result of the adoption of this resolution the British Government despatched a circular Note to the Great Powers, suggesting another Conference. This Note was presented in August, and, amongst other matters, stated that—

"the Congo stations are shunned, the only natives seen being soldiers, prisoners, and men who are brought in to work. The neighbourhood of stations which are known to have been populous a few years ago is now uninhabited, and emigration on a large scale takes place to the territory of neighbouring states, the natives usually averring that they are driven away from their homes by the tyranny and exaction of the soldiers."

Meanwhile, on July 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, an important debate had taken place in the Belgian House of Representatives, when strong speeches against the system in force in the Free State were made by M. Vandervelde, M. Lorand, M. Janson, and other deputies.

In April of the same year—as stated in Chapter II—Morel, with the aid of some friends, launched the first issue of a weekly journal entitled the *African Mail*, a periodical mainly devoted to the administrative and economic development of British West Africa, and which he edited for the next dozen years. The editing of this journal, in addition to carrying on his other controversial work, entailed a life of long and laborious days, and all through this time Morel was kept hard at work replying, in the column of his paper and in the public Press, to the innumerable books, pamphlets, and newspaper articles which were now being outpoured in an ever-increasing stream, and in all languages—British, French, German, Italian—by the agents and friends of King Leopold. The circulation of the journal was necessarily limited, but Morel thought of the plan of sending round “advance pulls” of his articles to the various newspapers, and by this means he secured a good deal of valuable publicity for his views.

### “The Congo Slave State.”

Later in the year Morel brought out a large pamphlet (112 pages) entitled *The Congo Slave State*.

This pamphlet was perhaps the strongest and fiercest indictment of Congo State rule he had yet published. It contained a full and detailed description of the Leopoldian system as carried on in the Domain de la Couronne, and in each of the subsidiary concessions into which the Congo was divided, illustrated by maps of the various territories under discussion. It dealt with the Rabinek Case at length, and described many of the abominable atrocities which had taken place in the Congo. It also contained a report of the debate in the House of Commons on Mr. Herbert Samuel’s resolution.

Through the generosity of one of his supporters,<sup>12</sup> who presented him with £100 for the purpose, Morel was able—this was before the days of high paper prices!—to distribute this pamphlet free of charge. Copies were sent to members of both Houses of Parliament, to the principal newspapers, and to America. It was widely reviewed, and caused considerable sensation.

### An Appeal to America.

To this King Leopold retorted by getting himself interviewed by the Paris editor of the *New York Herald* (to which interview Morel duly replied in the same journal), and by sending one of his henchmen on a lecturing tour through America. Why America? Because Morel in this pamphlet had made a special appeal to the United States.

“America,” he said, “has a peculiar and very clear responsibility in the matter, inasmuch as the American Government was the first to recognize the status of the International Association (which subsequently became the Congo State) and thereby paved the way for similar action on the part of the European Governments. America was deceived, as Europe was deceived, by the professions of philanthropy and high moral purpose so lavishly scattered by the Sovereign of the Congo State. It is to be hoped that President Roosevelt and the American people may help to undo the grievous wrong which was thereby unknowingly inflicted upon the natives inhabiting the Congo territories.”

<sup>12</sup> Mr. Herbert Ward.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE CONGO REFORM ASSOCIATION

A Herculean task—The Casement report—Formation of Congo Reform Association—The Congo Commission—Debate in the House—*King Leopold's Rule in Africa*—Visit to America—Mark Twain's *Soliloquy*—Received by President Roosevelt and Secretary Hay—Speech at Boston—Letter from Sir F. C. Selous—Serious reports from Congo—Sir Edward Grey becomes Foreign Secretary—Morel's advice—King Leopold's defiance—Public indignation—*Red Rubber*—A characteristic quotation—The *Daily Mail's* high praise—Belgium must annex the Congo.

IT is difficult to realize, even at this short distance of time, the Herculean difficulty of the task to which Morel had now set himself and the colossal strength of the opposition he had to face and overcome. Opposed to him was the ablest monarch in the world, a man of great intellectual power, shrewd, skilled in the ways of diplomacy, of infinite resource, as crafty as he was unscrupulous, the controller of immense wealth, related to half the Royal Families of Europe, and able to exercise immense influence through a thousand social, economic, and political channels. This man was the centre of a vast capitalistic conspiracy, with ramifications in every financial centre of Europe, influencing the Press, and even, in some cases, the religious organizations of a dozen countries, with an obedient Publicity Bureau working at high pressure, pouring out misrepresentations in the form of books, pamphlets, and special articles in a never-ceasing stream, and “everywhere rallying to its side the latent forces of moral reaction, infusing into them renewed energy and power, playing

for high stakes.”<sup>1</sup> Opposed to this conspiracy was a small band of men and women energetic indeed, and able, devoted to the cause of Humanity, but possessed of very little wealth and with practically no financial backing, having behind them at that time but limited public support, and endeavouring to set in motion the ponderous machinery of a cautious and reluctant Diplomacy—a diplomacy with its thoughts elsewhere, a diplomacy always ready, if allowed, especially in view of the crowding complications of the International System, to take the least difficult and inconvenient course, and to “let sleeping dogs lie”!

And yet, in spite of these difficulties and of almost incredibly unscrupulous opposition, Morel and his friends “won through,” as the following pages will show.

### The Casement Report.

In February 1904 there was published the most damning exposure of capitalistic exploitation in tropical Africa that has ever startled and shocked an easygoing world. This was the official report of the British Consul in the Congo State, Mr. Roger Casement, who at the request of the Foreign Office had been conducting a personal investigation into the situation on the Upper Congo. The account of his experiences was embodied in a document of thirty-nine pages, with an appendix of twenty-three further pages packed with specific facts, and with detailed and minute observations. It was a record of unrelieved horror, and with its appalling evidence of fiendish cruelty, torture, mutilation, flogging, burning, bestiality, and massacre, perpetrated systematically over a long period of years upon the unfortunate natives—men, women, and children—of Central Africa, in the interests of rubber-getting, by the agents of the Congo

<sup>1</sup> *Great Britain and the Congo*, p. 25.

Free State and the Concessionaire Companies, it proved to the hilt the charges which Morel and his friends had for years been making against the Leopoldian regime. This is not the place to describe the Consul's evidence in detail. It is sufficient to say that it was published, together with certain scathing observations by Lord Cromer—who had visited the Congo State's administrative stations on the Upper Nile—by the British Government and communicated by the latter to the Powers.<sup>2</sup>

### **Formation of the Congo Reform Association.**

The publication of this report, says Morel, "infused fresh fire into the movement for Congo Reform." It brought in new helpers and a great increase in popular sympathy, and Morel determined to seize the opportunity to direct this help and sympathy into an organization which would be able to assist the work of Congo Reform, in a more systematized way, and on a larger scale, than had hitherto been possible. He accordingly set to work to organize such a society. In this he was greatly helped by the co-operation of Sir Charles Dilke, Mr. Alfred Emmott, M.P., and others, and on March 23, 1904, at a demonstration at the Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool, he was able to announce the formation of the Congo Reform Association.

The aims of this Association was the restoration to the natives of the Congo of the rights guaranteed to them by the Berlin and Brussels Acts. "The Congo evil," declared

<sup>2</sup> This was the first report from a consular officer on the Congo published by the British Government. In the years that followed many other consular reports on the same subject were published, and these continued to throw a flood of light upon the dark places of the Leopoldian domain. Amongst the officials whose reports were published by the Government were Consul-General Cromie, Consul Nightingale, Consul Thesiger, Consul Lamont and Vice-Consuls Armstrong, Beak, Campbell and Mitchell. The principal White Books bearing on the subject are C.D. 2333, 3450, 3880, 4079, 4466, 5860, 6145 and 6606.

the Association, in its first public manifesto, "has grown to colossal dimensions, and it can only be put an end to by an organized public opinion which shall insist upon the rulers of civilized mankind terminating a wrong which has been allowed to reach its present state in private, but which to-day constitutes a public affront to humanity." The Presidency of the Association was accepted by Earl Beauchamp, K.G., and its supporters soon numbered a great many members of both Houses of Parliament, the principal leaders of the Churches, and many other distinguished men and women. Amongst those who supported the Association in those early days may be mentioned the names of Mr. John Morley (now Viscount Morley of Blackburn), Lords Aberdeen, Brassey, Tweedmouth, Kinnaird, and Denman, the Bishops of Liverpool, Durham, Rochester, and St. Asaph, Sir Charles Dilke, M.P., Sir John Kennaway, M.P., Sir Gilbert Parker, M.P., Mr. John Burns, M.P., the Rev. Stephen Gladstone, Professor Bosworth-Smith, Mr. W. R. Cadbury, and Mr. St. Loe Strachey.

### **King Leopold's Tactics.**

In view of the widespread horror and indignation caused by the Consular Report, King Leopold saw that it was time to take some action which might allay the public anger. His first step was to instruct his local officials to hold a "judicial enquiry" into the charges made in the report. This they made some show of doing, but it was an extremely superficial performance, and as such was contemptuously brushed aside by Lord Lansdowne. His next step was to appoint a Commission of Enquiry, composed of a Belgian State official, an official of the Congo, and a Swiss jurist, which proceeded to the Congo to examine into the charges. To this Commission the Foreign Office handed over the report containing the

names, dates, and places which had been suppressed in the published copy. The Government also suggested that a British representative should attend the sittings of the Commission. This suggestion was flatly refused. "No precedent," declared King Leopold's mouthpiece, "could be discovered, which could justify the official presence of a person deputed by a Foreign Government to attend a Commission of this character." This refusal was communicated to the Foreign Office on September 7th, and was accepted. The upshot of this was—as Morel predicted at the time—that the Congo Government suppressed the whole of the evidence taken by the Commission, and subsequently issued a report, signed by three Commissioners, "which sought . . . to attenuate the admissions as to atrocity and general misrule they had no option but to admit."<sup>3</sup>

But in the meantime Morel, foreseeing this result, had written to the missionaries in the Congo, with whom he was in correspondence, urging them to leave no stone unturned to see that the truth was placed before the Commissioners, and to be sure to send him a copy of the depositions made before the Commission. This they did, with the result that the Congo Reform Association was able ultimately to publish the evidence suppressed by the Commission.

At every point visited by the Commission,<sup>4</sup> where British or American missionaries were resident, evidence of the most appalling character was produced. As the Rev. J. H. Harris and his devoted wife, who subsequently returned to Europe to take an active and important part

<sup>3</sup> *Great Britain and the Congo*, pp. 131–2.

<sup>4</sup> Although the area of the Congo Free State was almost 1,000,000 miles, the Commission only spent three months on the Upper Congo, and not more than six weeks in the rubber districts. It returned to Europe in March 1905, and its report was issued in the following November (see p. 111).

in the work of the Congo Reform Association, reported at the time—

"The Commission endeavours to get through this slough of iniquity and river of blood, but finding it hopeless, asks how much longer I can go on. I tell them that I can go on until they are satisfied that hundreds of murders have been committed by —— in this district alone—murders of chiefs, men, women and little children—and that multitudes of witnesses only await my signal to appear by the thousand."

On June 9, 1904, a second debate took place in the House of Commons.<sup>5</sup> Vigorous speeches were delivered. Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice complained of the "insolent and insulting tone" of the Congo Government's dispatches; Sir Edward Grey declared that the story of the Congo was "an intolerable one to hear about in relation to contemporary history." Further steps must be taken. "We must run the risk of exciting jealousy and suspicion." He suggested the appointment of consuls "with consular jurisdiction." For the Government, Lord Percy replied that he earnestly hoped that the Congo Government would address itself to the enquiry which it has publicly and solemnly announced."

### "King Leopold's Rule in Africa."

Meanwhile Morel had been writing hard. No fewer than five pamphlets on the Congo appeared from his pen during the year, viz. *The Congo Horrors* (reprint of articles from the *Hastings and St. Leonards Weekly Mail and Times*), *The Scandal of the Congo* (Richardson), *The Treatment of Women and Children in the Congo* (Richardson)—which was subsequently republished in an American edition—*The Commercial Aspects of the Congo Question*

<sup>5</sup> These debates were henceforward to occur periodically until 1912.

(reprint from the African Society's *Journal*), and *The New African Slavery* (International Union, London).

And then came his third important work, *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* (Heinemann).

This book constituted the most complete indictment of Leopoldian rule which had appeared up to that time. It was, as the *Morning Post* remarked, "An amazing book to be written in the dawn of the twentieth century of the Christian era."

"I have thought," said Morel in his Introduction, "that an effort should be made to explain with some fullness the inward causes leading to those outward effects of which the Congo territories are, and have been for a considerable period, the scene. This I have endeavoured to do by defining the radical distinction between the development of tropical Africa by trade, which involves the recognition of native rights in land and forest produce, and the exploitation of tropical Africa through the methods introduced, legalized, and upheld by King Leopold, the sole arbiter of and legislator for the destinies of the Congo natives.

"I have tried to show that a humane, common-sense and just treatment of the native races of tropical Africa by the European Powers reposes upon certain fundamental principles, which, if set aside, must inevitably lead to the adoption of an alternate policy profoundly immoral in itself, maintainable by force alone, and bound in the long run to prove economically and politically disastrous."<sup>6</sup>

The book (466 pages) was divided into five parts. In the first part, which was purely historical, Morel dealt with the Berlin Act and its sequel; in the second he showed how the Congo State had destroyed legitimate trade on the Congo, and how the system in vogue had led to "Militarism, Murder, Mutilation, and the Traffic in Arms"; in the third he gave a detailed account of the system as it affected the natives in the various concessionaire districts; in the fourth he dealt with the system as affecting international commercial interests; in the

<sup>6</sup> See also Chapters IV and V.

fifth he printed a full account of the debate in the Belgian Chamber in the previous year;<sup>7</sup> and in the sixth he answered some of the attempts which had been made by the defenders of King Leopold to discredit the Casement Report. Not the least striking feature of the book was the inclusion of actual photographs of natives (including children) who had been mutilated by Congo soldiery.

Over and over again in this book did Morel hammer in the argument that the solution of the whole difficulty in tropical Africa was the preservation of native rights in the land.

"The one bulwark of the negro in tropical Africa," he said, "against the worst excesses of European civilization, is the determination of Europe to conserve his rights on his land and on his property. In helping him to develop his property on scientific lines ; in granting him internal peace ; in proving to him that he is regarded not as a brute but as a partner in a great undertaking from which Europe and Africa will derive lasting benefit, Europe will be adopting the only just, right, and practical policy."<sup>8</sup>

He concluded with the following eloquent appeal :—

"In the name of humanity, of common decency and pity, for honour's sake, if for no other cause, will not the Anglo-Saxon race—the Governments and the peoples of Great Britain and the United States, who between them are primarily responsible for the creation of the Congo State—make up their minds to handle this monstrous outrage resolutely, and so point the way, and set an example which others would then be compelled to follow ?

"In that hope, with an ever-present consciousness of inadequacy to portray the greatness of the evil and the greatness of the responsibility, the author submits this volume to the public."<sup>9</sup>

### Visit to America.

In August of the same year Morel received an invitation to address the International Peace Congress at Boston

<sup>7</sup> See p. 96.

<sup>8</sup> *King Leopold's Rule in Africa*, p. 101.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p. 372.

on the subject of the Congo. He was also deputed by the Congo Reform Association, the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, the Aborigines Protection Society, and the International Arbitration and Peace Association to take the opportunity of presenting on their behalf a memorial to President Roosevelt. To America Morel accordingly went—and several emissaries of King Leopold went there also.

Unfortunately for the King, however, the *New York American* discovered the purpose of these latter gentlemen, and published in its columns the particulars of an amazing plot which had been set on foot with the object of deceiving the American public. King Leopold, it appeared, had been actually financing a great "lobbying" campaign in Washington for the purpose of hoodwinking both the President and Congress. The King had also paid authors to write grandiloquent descriptions of the great "philanthropic" work in which the Congo State was engaged, and had handed over to one Californian lawyer alone the sum of 45,000 dollars for "work done" in this connection. Further, by entertaining influential American millionaires at his Court and by granting certain concessions to an American Company, he had endeavoured—and with some success—to influence the big moneyed interests of the States in his favour.

### Mark Twain's "Soliloquy."

On the other hand, Morel succeeded in enlisting on his side the powerful influence of Mark Twain, who published a most bitter and scathing satire on the subject. His book was entitled *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, and in it he represented the King as complaining bitterly of the accusations made against him by Morel and the missionaries.

"They remind the world," says Leopold, "that from the earliest days my house has been chapel and brothel combined, and both

industries working full time ; that I practised cruelties upon my queen and my daughters, and supplemented them with daily shame and humiliations ; that when my queen lay in the happy refuge of her coffin, and a daughter implored me on her knees to let her look for the last time upon her mother's face, I refused ; and that, not being satisfied with the stolen spoils of a whole alien nation, I robbed my own child of her property and appeared by proxy in court, a spectacle to the civilized world, to defend the act and complete the crime. They remark that 'if the innocent blood shed in the Congo State by King Leopold were put in buckets placed side by side, the line would stretch 2,000 miles ; if the skeletons of his ten millions of starved and butchered dead could rise up and march in single file, it would take them seven months and four days to pass a given point.' They go shuddering around, brooding over the reduction of that Congo population from 25,000,000 to 15,000,000 in the twenty years of my administration ; then they burst out and call me 'the king with ten million murders on his soul.' "

### **Received by President Roosevelt.**

Morel arrived in New York on September 29th, and considerable space was at once given to his mission by the American newspapers. On the following day the *New York Evening Post* devoted two columns to the subject, and had in its headlines : "At the same time a lecturer arrives who, it is announced, is in the pay of Leopold of the Belgians." The lecturer referred to was apparently a gentleman who, a few days later, delivered an address at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel entitled "A Bright Chapter in the History of Darkest Africa : The Congo State." Of this lecture the New York Press said : "The entire expense is borne by Leopold, this being probably the first instance on record of a king appealing through the lecture platform to a free people." The day following his arrival in the States, Morel was received at the White House by President Roosevelt, to whom he presented the memorial of which he was the bearer. The interview lasted for fifteen minutes, and was of a private nature. A fortnight later Morel had an

interview with the Secretary of State, concerning which the following communication was issued to the Press :—

" Mr. E. D. Morel was received by Secretary Hay, with whom he had twenty-five minutes' conversation. Mr. Morel was authorized to state that the memorial recently handed to the President had made a very favourable impression as regards its strength, its moderation, and the representative nature of its signatures. The subject was being carefully considered by the President and his Cabinet. No doubt existed in the mind of the American Government as to the motives of the signatories, which were recognized to be of an unselfish and humanitarian character."

### Speech at Boston.

On October 7th Morel addressed the International Peace Congress at Boston, some two thousand persons being present.

" The errand," he said, " which has brought me to the United States is a very simple one. It is to appeal to you on behalf of the oppressed and persecuted peoples of the Congo, for whose present unhappy condition you, in America, and we, in England, have a great moral responsibility, from which we cannot escape and from which in honour we should not attempt to escape. . . .

" It is my privilege to ask *you who are met here in the cause of peace whether you will not lend a helping hand in staying the cruel and destructive wars*—if the murder of helpless men and women can be dignified by such a name—which for ten years have been decimating the Congo people; whether you will or not give us your assistance in our effort to stop a system of oppression and extortion under which the Congo people are groaning and dying—a system through which the great heart of Africa is being laid waste, and beside whose dire results the exploits of so-called Arab slave-dealers pale into insignificance. . . .

" In appealing to you on behalf of those millions of helpless Africans, I am appealing to those who primarily—and, of course, unwittingly—riveted the chains around them. It is a great responsibility that you have. If our duty is clear, surely yours is also clear. The African slave trade has been revived, and is in full swing in the Congo to-day. I ask you to help us to root it up and fling it out of Africa, and just as I have no doubt of the greatness and loftiness of your ideals, so I have no doubt of what your answer will be."

He concluded his address with the following fine quotation from Lincoln : "Let us have faith that the right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty, as we understand it."

### **Letter from Sir F. C. Selous.**

The following letter from the late Sir Frederick Selous, the famous African traveller and big-game hunter (who lost his life in East Africa during the Great War), which was received by Morel about this time, is worth reproducing :—

" DEAR MR. MOREL,

" I have just reached this place on my way home from the wilds of Yukon territory. Certainly you may add my name to the signatories of the 'Memorial to President Roosevelt, President of the United States of America, concerning affairs in the Congo State,' if you wish to do so. Having read most of the articles which you wrote on the subject of the misgovernment of the Congo State in the paper which you kindly used to send me, and having also carefully studied Consul Casement's Report, and having read a great deal that has been written on the other side in defence of King Leopold's administration, I am convineed that the natives of the Congo valley have been more infamously treated during the last fifteen years than ever they were by Arab slave-raiders in earlier times. I trust that you may succeed in enlisting the active sympathy of so strong, just and humane a man as President Roosevelt, in your noble efforts to free the black populations of the Congo from a most cruel and iniquitous system of misgovernment. With best wishes for the success of the campaign of mercy on which you are now embarked,

" Believe me,

" Yours very truly,

" F. C. SELOUS."

Morel remained in America for three weeks, leaving for England on October 21st, thoroughly satisfied with the success of his brief but eventful mission.

### **Serious Reports from the Congo.**

In March 1905 King Leopold's Commission returned from the Congo. Its report, however, was not issued

for some months, and in the meantime the condition of affairs in the Congo rapidly grew worse. "The back of the Commissioners," said Morel, "had hardly been turned, when the rubber saraband, the dance of death, broke out with renewed vigour."<sup>10</sup> Native witnesses who had testified before the Commission against the conduct of the State Government were maltreated, persecuted and imprisoned, and "died like flies."<sup>11</sup> The reports received from the Congo, said Lord Percy in the House of Commons on August 4th, "all said that the state of affairs was not better—possibly it was worse than before the Commission arrived." "There was outrage against the natives," he added, "the lives of the missionaries themselves were in danger, while in several cases there had been attempts to intimidate or to punish those who gave evidence against the Commission."

Meanwhile the Congo Reform Association was actively organizing meetings in support of its policy, one of the most notable being one which Morel addressed at the Holborn Town Hall on June 7th, when Sir Harry Johnston presided, and the platform included Lord Aberdeen, Lord Beauchamp, Sir Charles Dilke, M.P., Mr. John Burns, M.P., Mr. Herbert Samuel, M.P., and many other distinguished personages. At this meeting Morel made a striking speech, and a resolution was carried which, after condemning the "system of personal rule" established in the Congo, went on to say that "this meeting desires to dissociate its condemnation" of that rule "from any aspersion on the Belgian people," and "invites the Belgian people to take up the administration of the Congo Independent State as a national task, respecting the legitimate rights of the natives to the soil and throwing open the whole of the basin of the Congo to international commerce without undue restrictions."

<sup>10</sup> *Great Britain and the Congo*, p. 140.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

In November (the month in which the report of King Leopold's Commission was issued) a memorial, signed by a large number of citizens, was presented to Lord Lansdowne when on a visit to Liverpool. In this year, too, Morel read a paper before the Geographical Section of the British Association, on "The Development of Tropical Africa by the White Races: Two Divergent Policies," which paper was subsequently issued as a pamphlet.

### Sir Edward Grey becomes Foreign Minister.

With 1906 there came the change of Government in this country, and Sir Edward Grey succeeded Lord Lansdowne at the Foreign Office. Morel took the opportunity of addressing a letter to the new Secretary of State,

"to suggest that pressure should be brought to bear upon the Congo Government to give full publicity to the evidence laid before its own Commission."

Sir Edward Grey took this line, and repeatedly pressed the Congo Government to publish this evidence. He was met, however, with a point-blank refusal, the last excuse given being that "Mr. Morel had, perhaps, suggested this course (i.e. the publication of the evidence) in the hope that he might discover . . . fresh elements of propaganda against the officials of the Independent State."<sup>12</sup> Thereupon the Foreign Office gave the matter up.

On February 20th a five days' debate on the Congo question began in the Belgian Chamber, the Congo administration being fiercely assailed by M. Vandervelde, M. Janson (titular Liberal leader), M. Georges Lorand (Liberal), Herr Daens (Flemish Independent), and M.

<sup>12</sup> Sir A. Hardinge to Sir E. Grey, April 6, 1906.

Colfs (Catholic), the latter stating that "From 1895 onwards the conspiracy against truth has been organized from top to bottom under well-nigh unbelievable conditions, in order to hide the crimes committed on the Congo."

### A Belgian Tribute to Morel.

In the course of this debate M. Lorand referred to Morel as follows :—

"Mr. Morel has been represented as the Liverpool merchants' man, the licensed calumniator of the Congo State, and whom our Jingo Press has treated with the same harshness as was exhibited in France towards the defenders of Captain Dreyfus. The information which I have been able to gather about him, from a large number of prominent colonials, agrees in representing him as a thoroughly honest man and absolutely sincere. This information has convinced me that the Secretary of the Congo Reform Association is truly inspired by humanitarianism, earnest and enlightened principles, guided by a desire for the salvation of the natives, and for the freedom of their commerce, whom he has seen handed over to the horrors of forced labour."

The Congo administration was defended by the Belgian Government, the work of the Congo Reform Association being especially denounced. This important debate was translated verbatim by Morel and published in book form in May. And as the Congo Government had declined to publish the evidence taken by the Congo Commission, the Congo Reform Association, as already recorded, did the next best thing and published the testimony given by the missionaries and of many native witnesses called by the latter. This was published in pamphlet form, and four large editions were sold. It was also translated into French by Morel, published in Belgium, and sent to every member of the Belgian House and to every Belgian newspaper.

### Leopold's Defence.

In June the Congo Government, which had set up a so-called "Committee of Reform," issued a number of

new decrees, accompanied by a manifesto from King Leopold, in which the latter declared :—

"The Congo . . . could only be, and has been, a personal enterprise. Now there is no more legitimate or respectable right than the right of the author to his own work, fruits of his labour. . . . My rights on the Congo are indivisible. They are the products of *My* toil, and *My* expense. . . . The interference which seeks to diminish his (the sovereign's) rights partakes of the character of a veritable usurpation, to use no harsher term. . . ."

This insolent utterance was received with great indignation by the British public. The Congo Reform Movement was now making remarkable headway, thanks very largely to the energy and enthusiasm of Morel, who in this year alone produced no fewer than eight new pamphlets on various aspects of the question, and began to appear regularly on the public platform. "The wave of indignation," he said, "was sweeping through the country; great meetings were being held in city after city, town after town."<sup>13</sup>

"In January 1906 the Lord Mayor of Liverpool summoned a citizens' meeting. The Town Hall was crowded to excess, and on the motion of Dr. Chavasse, Bishop of Liverpool, . . . a resolution was passed, condemning the system of rule existing in the Congo as 'a revival under worse forms of the African slave trade.' The initiative of the civic authorities of Liverpool was followed by similar action on the part of the civic authorities of our largest cities, and of many towns and boroughs all over the country."<sup>14</sup>

Citizens' meetings were held,

"presided over by the Chief Magistrates and supported by influential residents belonging to varying political camps and religious denominations—Church dignitaries sitting cheek-by-jowl with Nonconformist ministers at a period of bitter sectarian strife; Tory squires and Radical politicians met together in a common determination."<sup>15</sup>

"The national sentiment was reflected in the Houses of Parliament. Lord Lansdowne . . . gave rein to his indignation. . . .

<sup>13</sup> *Great Britain and the Congo*, p. 156.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13.

He denounced the Congo system . . . as ‘ bondage under the most barbarous and inhuman conditions, maintained for mercenary motives of the most selfish character.’ . . . He spoke firmly in favour of consular jurisdiction. The Archbishop of Canterbury declared that the situation was ‘as extraordinary in its character as it is melancholy in its incidents.’ In the Commons, fierce denunciation came from all sides. Sir Charles Dilke agreed with Lord Lansdowne in urging consular jurisdiction. . . . Sir Gilbert Parker stigmatized the royal manifesto as ‘an extraordinary challenge to Europe and to all civilized peoples.’ . . . Earl Percy shared the general exasperation.”<sup>16</sup>

To all this Sir Edward Grey and Lord Fitzmaurice replied that consular jurisdiction would certainly have a “beneficial” effect. The British Government would wait, but could not “wait for ever.”

### “Red Rubber.”

In November 1906 Morel published the book which attained the widest circulation of any of his larger works on the Congo question (it ran into five editions between 1906 and 1908)—his famous *Red Rubber* (T. Fisher Unwin), a book which has been described as “one of the most passionate indictments of injustice and appeal for human liberty” ever written in the English tongue. It opens with the following quotation from William Lloyd Garrison :—

“ I will be as harsh as truth and as uncompromising as justice.  
 I am in earnest,  
 I will not equivocate ;  
 I will not excuse ;  
 I will not retreat a single inch ;  
 And I will be heard.  
 Posterity will bear testimony that I was right.”

The quotation is characteristic of Morel. It aptly describes his attitude on everything. Some of his friends

<sup>16</sup> *Great Britain and the Congo*, p. 156.

may perhaps shake their heads a little sadly when they read it to-day, reflecting that there have been occasions when, if Morel's temperament had been a little more pliable, a little more diplomatic, he might have stood better in the world's eyes ; he certainly would have been spared much pain. But that is Morel all over. Convinced himself of the justice of his case, he hurls his defiance at his opponents—if necessary, at the whole world. Here lies at once his strength, and the defects of his strength ; an uncompromising courage which makes him ready, in the pursuit of what he believes to be right, to brave storms of unpopularity and abuse, and an impatience of opposition (and this, too, is so very British !) which sometimes causes him to overlook the necessity of dealing tenderly with the prejudices of other Englishmen, who may perhaps be persuaded, but who can never be bludgeoned—even by facts—into changing their opinions.

### Praised by the “Daily Mail.”

*Red Rubber* created an enormous sensation. “The most appalling indictment of personal rapacity, cruelty, expropriation of life and labour, maladministration and tyrannical atrocity,” said the *Daily Mail*, “ever recorded on irrefutable proof against any one man in any country or in any age. Contention as to facts has disappeared. The truth in all its international dangers—the horror of it all—stands out naked”—a very generous tribute from the journal whose anti-French policy, as recorded in Chapter III, had been opposed so vigorously by Morel ten years before. “Mr. Morel’s gallantry in flinging himself into the fight,” wrote Sir Charles Dilke in the *Evening News*, “will never be forgotten as long as history records the misdeeds of the Congo State.” “If there are any who are not yet believers in the reality of the Congo Government’s misdeeds,” said the *Spectator*, “Mr. Morel’s

new book may be recommended as a certain means of conviction. To the author more than to any man alive, is due the ventilation of this crime against civilization. He has fought a long, uphill battle against apathy, misrepresentation and the power of an unscrupulous purse. And he has been successful. He has made Congo Reform a part of the sworn creed of many of our chief public men." The *Evening Standard* took the same view. "Mr. Morel," said this journal, "has done more than any man living to expose the foul blot on the reputation of certain Belgian financiers. . . . For every shift and wile, for every specious argument, he is ready with facts and proofs. His new volume, in fact, is a perfect armoury of weapons for the use of English St. Georges in smiting this Leopold Africanus."

The comment of *Le Peuple* of Brussels is also interesting. "Mr. Morel," said the Belgian newspaper, "understands clearly the difficult position in which Belgium finds herself in her relations with the Congo State. Annexation by Belgium appears to him the best solution, because, as he says, it would free Belgium from an intolerable moral situation."

### **Belgium Must Annex the Congo.**

By this time the British Foreign Office had come to the conclusion that, as Morel had pointed out in *Red Rubber*, the best way of solving the problem of the Congo would be for the whole territory to be transferred to the Belgian Government, a proposal which had already been taken up by the Belgian Chamber (March 2, 1906). This was the view expressed by Sir Edward Grey to an influential deputation which waited upon him on November 20th, introduced by Lord Monkswell, who had succeeded Lord Beauchamp as President of the Congo Reform Association. Belgian annexation would,

said the Foreign Minister, "produce, not a list of reforms for the Congo, but an entire change in the system of government of the country." With this declaration the Congo Reform Movement entered upon a new stage, which will be dealt with in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE PEOPLE AND THE FOREIGN OFFICE

The question of Belgian annexation—Would the system be changed?—Popular agitation—Enthusiastic scenes—“Wait and see”—The Treaty of Transfer—Queen’s Hall demonstration—Foreign Office hesitates—Public pressure intensified—Sir E. Grey takes firmer line—A manifesto to the nation—Thanked by Foreign Office—The Belgian scheme of reform—The Albert Hall meeting—The Archbishop of Canterbury takes the chair—*Great Britain and the Congo*—An important book—Morel’s growing distrust of diplomacy.

THE proposal that the territory hitherto administered by the Congo Free State should be annexed by Belgium now held the field. If such annexation would really, in the words of Sir Edward Grey, bring about “an entire change in the system,” well and good. No one would then criticize the proposal. But there were grave doubts as to whether annexation would produce such a “change.” Belgian Ministers had repeatedly defended the Congo State against the attacks of M. Vandervelde and his friends. They had stated that the “glorious work of the Congo Administration” was “above all attack,”<sup>1</sup> and had characterized the criticisms which had been passed upon it as calumnies. These Ministers still remained in office. It was therefore uncertain, to say the very least, whether any scheme of transfer devised by these Ministers would really “change” the system. The fear was lest “annexation” might merely perpetuate the old vicious Leopoldian policy under another name.

<sup>1</sup> Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, February–March 1906.

"What you wish," said M. Vandervelde, addressing the Belgian Ministers in the course of a debate, "is the perpetuation in the future of the system at present existing."<sup>2</sup>

To this point Morel and the Congo Reform Association now addressed themselves. Their object was that the British Government should exercise its influence to see that "annexation" should involve "a radical, thorough, comprehensive change of regime"; the restoration to the natives of their elementary human rights, the re-establishment of legitimate trade, the disappearance of the reign of slavery, shame, and terror."<sup>3</sup> And through their influence resolutions in support of this object poured into the Foreign Office from all parts of the country.

### Public Agitation.

Early in 1907 the Congo Reform Association issued an Appeal to Parliament:—

"The pressing need," so ran the appeal, "of the present situation is a declaration on the part of Great Britain that annexation, if it is to take place, must be in conformity with the Act of Berlin; in other words, that it must entail a total reversion of the system which for fifteen years had plunged the Congo peoples in unutterable misery."<sup>4</sup>

This appeal was warmly backed by the Press, especially by the *Times* and the *Morning Post*, which latter journal, all through the campaign, rendered yeoman service to the cause of Congo Reform, and was one of Morel's staunchest supporters. Public meetings were held all over the country to advocate this policy. A memorable scene was that which was witnessed in the Coliseum

<sup>2</sup> *Great Britain and the Congo*, pp. 177-178.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 172.

<sup>4</sup> *The Trade of the Congo: an Appeal to Parliament*, by E. D. Morel Richardson).

at Leeds on March 6th, "when four thousand Free Church delegates, at the conclusion of an appeal by the Rev. F. B. Meyer, rising in their seats, solemnly pledged Nonconformity to leave no stone unturned to end the reign of oppression in the Congo."<sup>5</sup> The resolution adopted by the Free Church Council on this occasion was presented to Sir Edward Grey on June 19th by an influential deputation, which included amongst its members Mr. (afterwards Sir Joseph) Compton Rickett, M.P., Dr. Rendel Harris, Dr. Horton, Dr. Clifford, the Rev. J. Scott Liddett, and Mr. Robert Whyte. In the same month, a memorial was presented to the Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, at Plymouth, signed by the Mayors of that town, of Devonport, and of Exeter, by Lord Clifford of Chudleigh, the Bishop of Exeter, and others, praying that H.M. Government would give their assent to no scheme of Belgian annexation which did not provide "guarantees of a definite and explicit character for a total reversion of the existing system." At a meeting at Hull, says Morel, "held on June 20th, where three thousand people congregated, the citizens of the city of Wilberforce, led by their Mayor and Sheriff, rose to their feet to acclaim the speakers. Such scenes have been witnessed in many places by those who have been privileged to participate in this great national movement."<sup>6</sup>

Northern Convocation passed in both Houses a series of resolutions on the subject on February 28th, the speakers being the Archbishop of York, the Bishops of Wakefield, Durham, Liverpool, and Sodor and Man, Archdeacon Madden, and Canon Smethwick; and Southern Convocation followed suit on May 3rd, when the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishops of London, Birmingham, and Southwark spoke; whilst "in November of the same year a striking 'Appeal to the Nation' was

<sup>5</sup> *Great Britain and the Congo*, p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13.

issued to the Press, signed *inter alia* by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the President of the Free Church Council, the Presidents of the National Liberal Association, of the Church Missionary Society, the Lord Mayors of our principal cities, and Sir Harry Johnston.”<sup>7</sup>

It was difficult, however, to move the Foreign Office, Sir Edward Grey, anticipating a celebrated phrase of Mr. Asquith’s, stating (House of Commons, May 15th) that he intended to “*wait and see* what the conditions and scheme of annexation” would be. This did not satisfy the Reformers. “In the last debate in the House of Commons,” said the Archbishop of Canterbury (House of Lords, July 29th), “Sir Edward Grey spoke of the gruesome unanimity with which we all regarded it. Well, that is a unanimity which ought to lead to something more than grumbling and complaining, than acquiescing in delay.” However, on August 1st, in the House of Commons, Sir Edward Grey again declined to “press the matter forward” until he knew “the actual conditions” of annexation.

### The Treaty of Transfer.

He was soon to know them. On December 3, 1907, the Treaty of Transfer was published, “which proclaimed before all the world the fixed determination of the Belgian Government to identify Belgium with the African policy of her King,”<sup>8</sup> a treaty, too, which had been signed and sealed by the Belgian Government and by the Congo Government, and which could only be rejected or accepted—but not altered—by the Chamber.

The publication of this treaty was greeted with an outburst of public indignation. In January an appeal, signed, amongst others, by the Bishop of London, the Bishop of Kensington, Dr. Clifford, and the Rev. J. Monro

<sup>7</sup> *Great Britain and the Congo*, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p. 196.

Gibson, was sent out from London House to all the clergy and ministers of Nonconformity. "The year 1908 opens," so ran the passage in this appeal, "with the prospect of the continued oppression of the Congo races and the prolongation of this systematic outrage, a prospect which must be intolerable to every British subject who realizes the preponderating part played by the British people in the foundation of the Congo Free State." In the following month (February 21st) a great demonstration was held in the Queen's Hall, which building, said the *Daily Chronicle*, "was packed from floor to topmost ceiling, and the scene outside before the doors opened was one that is witnessed only on some great national occasion." The Lord Mayor of London, in his robes of office, presided, supported by his Sheriffs, by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, the Mayor and Sheriff of Hull, some forty members of Parliament, and leading representatives of the Churches, of literature, and of the professions, and a resolution, moved by Sir John Kennaway, M.P. (Unionist), and supported by Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, M.P. (Labour), and Sir George White, M.P. (Liberal), was passed, declaring that "no scheme of annexation which does not restore to the native population its rights and liberties, and which does not immediately reintroduce freedom of commercial intercourse . . . can be acceptable to the people of Great Britain." "Public opinion in this country," said Lord Lansdowne in the House of Lords (February 24th), "has been more moved over this question than by almost any question of the kind which I can remember." This was admitted by Sir Edward Grey in the House of Commons two days later, when he observed that "it is not, I think, too much to say that no external question for at least thirty years has moved the country so strongly and so vehemently as this, in regard to the Congo." Indeed it almost seemed, as though

this public opinion had succeeded in shaking the Foreign Office out of its habitual lethargy, for the Foreign Secretary went on to make the following declaration :—

“ We agree that it must be a condition precedent to any transfer of the Congo to another authority, that that authority should take it over on terms which will place it in a position to give assurances, and to guarantee that those assurances shall be carried out, and treaty obligations fulfilled.”

### Vacillating Policy of the Foreign Office.

It might have been thought from this that the Foreign Office had at last made up its mind to take definite and determined action, and to inform the Belgian Government that any annexation which took place must “ give the Belgian people a free hand . . . to inaugurate drastic reforms.”<sup>9</sup> Many Belgians desired that such action should be taken. But it was not to be. After this slight show of vigour the Foreign Office again resumed the feeble and vacillating policy it had pursued throughout, and, in spite of all that had happened, and of the unmistakable proofs it had repeatedly received of King Leopold’s bad faith, it contented itself with making representations to the Belgian Government as to the reforms it considered advisable, accompanying these with the apologetic statement : “ H.M. Government merely submit these views for the friendly consideration of the Belgian Government.”<sup>10</sup>

“ That dispatch,” said Morel, “ sealed the failure of Foreign Office policy. A Belgian annexation of the Congo on terms perpetuating the old system was henceforth inevitable. The British Government might refuse to recognize annexation when the treaty was voted, but the accomplished fact would have taken place.”<sup>11</sup>

Yet, in the words of the *Times* (April 1908), “ it would

<sup>9</sup> *Great Britain and the Congo*, p. 204.

<sup>10</sup> Sir E. Grey to Sir A. Hardinge, March 27, 1908.

<sup>11</sup> *Great Britain and the Congo*, p. 207.

perhaps be better that Belgium should not annex the Congo at all than she should agree to annexation on conditions which would prove a fruitful source of fresh complications."

In April the third anniversary of the foundations of the Congo Reform Association was celebrated by a great meeting in the Central Hall, Liverpool, the building, with a seating accommodation of nearly three thousand persons, being inadequate to contain the crowd, which overflowed into two adjoining halls. The Lord Mayor of Liverpool presided, and messages of support were received from the Chief Magistrates of a score of towns, and from ninety-two Members of Parliament. In the same month the President of the Free Church Council issued a circular urging the celebration of a special Congo Sunday, which was held in a large number of Nonconformist churches throughout the country, and towards the end of the year, on the initiative of the Bishop of Liverpool, a "Congo Sunday" was observed throughout the Liverpool district, this example being followed in several other important towns, including Newcastle and Hull.

### Public Pressure Intensified.

The Treaty of Transfer passed through the Belgian Chamber on August 20, 1908, but, as the "entire change in the system of government" required by the Foreign Office was not yet forthcoming, Sir Edward Grey declined to give official recognition to the annexation, a refusal which, says Morel, was "treated with absolute indifference."<sup>12</sup> All this delay was, of course, extremely galling to the Reformers, who, after years of public agitation, saw the same abominable system being perpetuated in the Congo, the same barbarities still being practised upon

<sup>12</sup> *Great Britain and the Congo*, p. 20.

the helpless natives. The only thing open to them was to intensify the pressure, and this was done in a remarkable series of public meetings held in all parts of the country.

Citizens' meetings, presided over by the Mayors of the towns in question, were held in great number. "Of other meetings, not officially summoned by the Chief Magistrate . . . there have been thousands of all kinds, great and small, held in the largest available public building ; held in the open air—as at the vast gathering of ten thousand Methodists at Mow Cop, whence, from every platform, a resolution was voted and forwarded to the Foreign Office ; held in the humble Baptist chapel. I have spoken to an audience of 1,500—nearly all men—in a covered market-place rigged up with benches for the occasion. There have been meetings composed almost entirely of working men. There have been meetings where men prominent in social standing, in politics, and in administration have been gathered together. . . . I have seen the Sun Hall in Liverpool, which accommodates four thousand, packed from floor to ceiling."<sup>13</sup> In fact, between 1907 and 1909 Morel himself addressed something like fifty large gatherings in various parts of the country, in addition to his work of directing the organization of the whole movement, editing a weekly journal, inditing numerous public dispatches to the Foreign Office, and carrying on a vigorous campaign in the Press, dealing with this point and with that, rebutting the arguments contained in the Leopoldian literature, which continued to pour out in a constant flood all over Europe, and helping generally to keep the agitation alive and vigorous in two continents—for American interest had been by this time thoroughly awakened and the Government of the United States had despatched its own consular representatives

<sup>13</sup> *Great Britain and the Congo*, p. 14.

to the Congo, and had joined its official protests to those of Great Britain. The effort was colossal, and must have involved an enormous strain even upon the untiring energies of the Secretary of the Congo Reform Association.

### A National Manifesto.

All this had its effect, and in November 1908 the Foreign Office sent a dispatch to the Belgian Government, endorsing for the first time the policy consistently advocated by Morel, and asking for "an immediate amelioration" in the lot of the natives. This dispatch was welcomed by the publication of a national manifesto almost unique in our annals for the character and weight of the signatures attached to it, a document which the *Times* described as a "spontaneous manifestation of a very unusual kind." This document bore the signatures of Lord Cromer, three other Peers, nineteen Bishops, the best-known leaders of Nonconformity, seventy-six Members of Parliament, seven Lord Mayors, thirty-two Mayors, the Presidents of seven Chambers of Commerce, "thirteen newspaper and magazine editors, representing such divergencies of opinion as can be imagined, for example, between Mr. St. Leo Strachey, Mr. W. T. Stead, and Mr. J. S. R. Phillips"; the President of the National Liberal Federation, and of men famous in the world of letters, medicine, philanthropy, philosophy, and commerce.

"Welcoming a Belgian annexation of the Congo," so ran this letter, "we have nevertheless, contended that . . . the special responsibilities incurred by the people of Great Britain . . . make it incumbent upon them to ensure that no settlement for the future government of the Congo shall receive the sanction of this country which does not place the freedom and the just rights of the native population upon a footing of permanent security."

Shortly after this Morel sent a long memorandum to

the Foreign Office, for which he was officially thanked by Sir Edward Grey in the following words :—

“ Sir E. Grey feels that the exhaustive and closely reasoned memorandum enclosed . . . will be of great assistance to His Majesty’s Government in their efforts to secure the restoration to the natives of their rights.”

### A New “Peter the Hermit.”

In the spring of 1909 Morel paid a special visit to France and Switzerland for the purpose of making the motives of the Congo Reform Movement in Great Britain more clearly understood in those countries.<sup>14</sup>

After conferring with him, the Council of the International League and of the French League for the defence of the natives of the Congo Basin decided to agree upon a common definition of their aims ; the importance of this, as the *Morning Leader* remarked at the time, being that for the first time the International League and the French branch of that League were brought into line with the British and American movements.

On February 25th Morel was received by M. Clemenceau, then Prime Minister, with whom he had a long interview, and on February 27th the *Times* printed the following dispatch, dated the previous day, from its Paris correspondent :—

“ Mr. E. D. Morel was entertained at lunch to-day by a number of distinguished Frenchmen in the political, colonial and literary world. The guests included M. Anatole France, M. Joseph Chailley, Deputy for La Vendée and Chairman of the French Colonial Union ; M. Vigouroux, Deputy of the Haute Loire ; MM. Mersimy and Steeg, Deputies ; M. Paul Bourde, Pierre Mille and Felicien Challaye. M. Chailley, in giving the health of Mr. Morel, referred to him

<sup>14</sup> The charge had been made on the Continent that the Congo Reformers were trying to work up an agitation under cover of which Great Britain was to annex the Congo, and that Morel was a sort of literary Jameson preparing public opinion with his pen for such a raid.

as defending the ideas of human liberty . . . dear to France. . . . So far as it was possible to support his efforts, they desired to do so. M. Chailley then referred to the state of affairs in the French Congo. Mr. Morel, in a improvised reply, said that the British and American movements against Congo misrule were national movements wholly uninspired by Government. It was unthinkable, in his view, that France should dissociate herself from a liberating movement seeking to suppress a detestable policy, foreign to French sentiments. He was well aware of the French Congo difficulty touched upon by M. Chailley. All that he, as an Englishman, could say on the matter was to express regret that France, whose magnificent work in her West African possessions proper was understood and appreciated in England, should have been lured into adopting a different standard in the French Congo. Mr. Morel's speech was warmly applauded and the general discussions which ensued showed that the unhappy condition of the French Congo was fully acknowledged in French Parliamentary and Colonial circles, and that the legal difficulties connected with the position of the concessionaires appeared to many present—M. Anatole France, however, vigorously dissenting—too great to be overcome. . . . Mr. Morel, accompanied by M. Mille, afterwards went to the Ministry of the Colonies, and had an interview which lasted an hour and a half with the Colonial Minister. Mr. Morel does not feel at liberty to make any public statement on the subject.

"The impression made by Mr. Morel's speech at to-day's luncheon was well summed up by M. Anatole France, who remarked : 'C'est de l'art sans le faire exprès : on ne voit pas comment c'est fait.' *It appears, moreover, that Mr. Morel really succeeded in dissipating the doubts cherished in French Colonial circles as to the reasons and motives of British opinion with regard to the methods employed in the Congo.*'"

### Speaks at the Sorbonne.

On February 27th Morel spoke at the Sorbonne, his address on this occasion being fully reported in the British Press. The *Times* (March 1st) closed its report with these words :—

"The effect of Mr. Morel's words may be estimated by the fact that at the conclusion of his address a resolution was voted acknowledging the disinterestedness of the English movement, and expressing the hope 'that the French Government would take its stand with the British and American Governments.' "

From Paris Morel went on to Geneva, where he addressed a distinguished audience at the University (March 4th). M. René Claparède presided, and Morel's speech, said the *Times*, made "a great impression."

"The martyrdom of the Congo races," he said, "exceeds all that the most fertile imagination could conceive as possible in the dawning years of the twentieth century. It is a world-crime, and all civilized peoples must take cognizance of it and arrest it. Switzerland, the country of the Red Cross, has heard the cry of anguish rising from these distant and gloomy forests. She has produced men of courage to proclaim that so colossal an infamy is an outrage upon the human conscience everywhere, and that small countries as well as powerful ones have the right and the duty to protest. I am not sure that the smaller states are not quite specially entitled to make their voices heard, because successful wrong-doing in any part of the world threatens them particularly, encouraging as it does, and must do, lawlessness in Europe. The voice of Switzerland has always been listened to in the councils of the nations. The more earnest Swiss action in this matter, the more efficacious will Swiss influence prove to be. *And a crime against Humanity knows no frontiers.*"

Further meetings were addressed by Morel at Neuchâtel and Chaux-de-Fonds.

### A Modern Knight-errant.

Shortly after this Continental tour the *Spectator* (March 27th) published an article in which Morel and the famous war correspondent, Mr. H. W. Nevinson, were coupled together under the title of "Our modern Knights-errant."

"Neither," so ran the article, "has ever been a member of Parliament, and neither has the help of riches or an accidentally great position. For all we know, they both stumbled unintentionally across what provoked their indignation. But once the needed reform had been set before them as a goal to be reached, they did not fail or falter on the journey. They had the constancy of vision of a Shaftesbury. Mr. Morel, as every one knows, founded the Congo Reform Association, which has been a rallying point for years for all who felt the burden of responsibility assumed by Britain when the Congo Free State was created. . . ."

And here it may be mentioned that on several occasions at the height of the Congo agitation Morel went over to Brussels to confer with the Belgian Reformers as to the particular action which the situation at the moment demanded. Whilst in the Belgian capital he was invariably shadowed by police spies, and he tells an amusing story of how, calling one day upon a well-known Belgian scientist, he was met at the hall door by the distinguished man, who, after glancing nervously up and down the street, hurried him inside, exclaiming in agitated tones, "Have you a revolver?" On receiving a reply in the negative the scientist shook his head ominously. It is a fact that Morel more than once was the recipient of letters from Belgians threatening him with death.

On one occasion, when he was being more than usually attacked in the Belgian Press, M. Vandervelde suggested that he should speak at a great Socialist demonstration, offering him an escort of Socialists from the station to the meeting-place. Morel privately consulted the Foreign Office on the matter, not desiring to embarrass the Government in any way, and, in deference to their unofficially expressed wishes, declined the invitation.

It must not be thought that the entire Belgian Press was hostile to the cause of the Congo Reformers. During the whole campaign Morel's views were warmly championed by *Le Peuple*, the organ of the Belgian Social Democracy, a journal which had the largest circulation of any Belgian newspaper; by *Le Patriote* of Brussels, the great lay Catholic journal; and, from the time of its foundation, by *La Dernière Heure*, a newspaper of Liberal views.

### **The Belgian Government's Scheme of Reform.**

In June 1909 Sir Edward Grey issued a further dispatch, in which he described the state of affairs then existing

in the Congo as "indistinguishable from slavery," and in the following October the Belgian Government at last produced its scheme of reform. This scheme in some respects was unsatisfactory, for although it provided for the abolition of forced labour and the restoration of native rights as from July 1910 in one half of the Congo territory, yet it further prolonged the old system until July 1911 in one section of the remainder, until July 1912 in another section, and for an indefinite period in a third. The British Government making no protest, the scheme was forced through the Belgian Chamber as it stood, despite the protests of many Belgian Liberals and of the whole of the Belgian Socialist party, led by M. Vandervelde.

Although imperfect in these respects, this scheme certainly constituted a great advance along the path to better things, and this success naturally aroused the Reformers to still greater activities. They accordingly organized a giant demonstration at the Albert Hall, at which the Archbishop of Canterbury presided and paid a notable tribute to the Secretary of the Congo Reform Association.

"To Mr. Morel," he said, "this country, and tens of thousands outside this country, owe a debt of gratitude larger than they can ever repay, for strenuous years of devotion and self-sacrifice on behalf of what is righteous and just and true."

This demonstration was followed up by a series of citizens' meetings, addressed by Morel and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, at Edinburgh, Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Hull, and Plymouth. In April 1910 an important memorial was presented to Mr. Asquith, then Prime Minister, urging the Government to insist upon

"the total abolition of forced labour for purposes of revenue, coupled with legislation recognizing the rights of native tribes and

communities in their land, and the throwing open of the whole of the Congo to normal commercial relations between its inhabitants and the outer world."

This memorial was signed by 162 members of Parliament, and amongst these it is interesting to note the names of Mr. G. H. Roberts, Mr. Charles Bathurst, Mr. William Brace, Sir William Bull, Sir Henry Dalziel, Mr. Arthur Henderson, and, of course, Sir Charles Dilke.

### "Great Britain and the Congo."

In the autumn of 1909, just before the publication of the Belgian reform proposals, Morel published his fifth book, *Great Britain and the Congo* (Smith, Elder & Co.), with an Introduction by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

In his Introduction Sir Arthur Conan Doyle paid a fine tribute to Morel.

"Neither Wilberforce," said he, "nor any of those men whose names we honour as the protagonists in the fight against the slave trade have been actuated by nobler motives, or have fought harder for the faith that was in them. . . . How heavy already is our responsibility can only be appreciated by those who listen to Mr. Morel. Had Governments listened to him in the past, the world would have been better."

*Great Britain and the Congo* was, in more ways than one, a very interesting book. In the first place it was very clearly written and arranged, and, taken in conjunction with *King Leopold's Rule in Africa*, it formed, in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's opinion, "the most terrific indictment against a man and against a system which has ever been drawn up."

Secondly, it appeared at a very important moment in the history of Congo reform.

"The time has come," said Morel, "when the British nation must decide whether it is in earnest over this Congo question. . . .

"The nation is faced with a crisis in its moral history. For four years, from . . . its leaders in all that makes for the greatness of the nation have poured forth condemnation and denunciation of a legalized iniquity, a system . . . based upon robbery, slavery, and spoliation . . . trampling every principle of freedom, justice and liberty underfoot . . . proclaiming aloud the right of its beneficiaries to pile up untold riches from the slave labour of millions of men.

"The nation has challenged that monstrous claim . . . it has committed itself too deeply . . . to draw back without dishonour. . . . The nation . . . should be made to understand that the task to which it has set its hand is not completed ; that although the 'Congo Free State' has passed away, the system of misrule elaborated and enforced by its sovereign is still flourishing. . . .

"There are people to-day who are giving dangerous and dis honourable advice to the nation. . . . The false prophets of the creed which waves the flag of international complications when a great wrong requires redress, while justifying war for a coaling station or a goldmine, a sphere of influence or a 10 per cent. interest, are busily and subterraneously at work, with their everlasting appeal to selfish interests, their dismissal of great moral issues as 'sentiment,' their contemptuous depreciation of all that is noble and sound in a nation ; thrusting aside the forces of national consciousness as necessarily irresponsible, uncalculating, unwise, fanatical.

"But no nation really great . . . thrice armed with the justice of the cause . . . will draw back."<sup>15</sup>

And after describing in clear and vivid detail the diplomatic history of the relations between the Foreign Office and the Congo from 1896 to July 1909, he concluded with these words :—

"My colleagues and I have done our utmost. We have given of our best. We have appealed to Governments and to statesmen.

"It is only left for us to appeal to the public opinion which creates Governments and invests statesmen with executive authority."

Thirdly, this book marked an important transitional stage in the development of Morel's mind and career. More than any book he had previously written did it

<sup>15</sup> *Great Britain and the Congo*, pp. 4-7.

deal with questions of diplomacy. The Congo Reform Movement and his association with such men as Dilke had brought him in close contact with the Foreign Office and the wider field of international relationships. Over and over again in this book did he show his impatience with "the deadly compromises of diplomacy and the paralysing influences of indifference and moral flabbiness,"<sup>16</sup> with the "dry-rot in British diplomacy"<sup>17</sup> and its "inconsistent and tortuous" character,<sup>18</sup> with the "errors"<sup>19</sup> of the Foreign Office, its "monumental torpidity"<sup>20</sup> and its "lack of accurate information on the side of the bureaucratic machinery of the department,"<sup>21</sup> with the lack of "clearness of vision"<sup>22</sup> on the part of British policy, with the undemocratic character and evil influence of secret diplomacy.<sup>23</sup> In a way, therefore, this book was the direct forbear of his *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, published three years later under the title of *Morocco in Diplomacy*. It was a link between Morel the opponent of slavery and Morel the opponent of secret diplomacy.

<sup>16</sup> *Great Britain and the Congo*, p. xviii.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 255.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 244.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 196.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 254.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 197.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 238.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 244.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE FUTURE OF AFRICA

Visit to Nigeria—Special Correspondent of the *Times*—*Nigeria : its Peoples and its Problems*—Thanked by British officials—Warm praise of the British administration—A tribute from the *Outlook*—Gratitude of the natives—Appointed to West African Lands Committee—Work at the Colonial Office—Lectures to Royal Society of Arts—Sir Percy Girouard's praise—“The Treatment of Coloured Races”—Address at Church Congress—The Great War and Africa—The Empire Resources Development Committee—*Africa and the Peace of Europe*—Proposed neutralization of non-colonizable Africa.

THE position towards the close of the summer of 1910 was roughly as follows: Forced labour had been abolished and freedom of trade restored in one half of the Congo, whilst in the other half the old system was to continue for varying periods, the British Government in the meantime taking up a position of “passive resistance” by continuing its refusal to recognize the annexation. In these circumstances the Congo Reform Association decided to make use of any opportunity which occurred to accelerate the process of reform, to test the genuineness of the changes by pressing for the production of consular Reports, and to support the Government in resisting any demand for “premature recognition.” Beyond this, however, it felt it could not go—especially as King Leopold, the *fons et origo* of the whole evil business, no longer lived<sup>1</sup> and had been succeeded by a sovereign of high character, amiable instincts, and transparent sin-

<sup>1</sup> He had died that year (1910).

cerity. This meant a period of relative inactivity for the work, and Morel decided to make use of this welcome interval by paying his first and long-promised visit to Nigeria.

### Visit to Nigeria.

Nigeria, our largest African protectorate, covering an area equal to that of Germany, Italy, and Holland combined, was then in a state of transition. The question of amalgamating Northern and Southern Nigeria—at that time separate protectorates—was being discussed, and behind this lay much larger problems of native policy. Two schools of thought were at issue. One favoured direct, the other indirect, rule. The first believed in investing British officials with direct powers of interfering with the internal administration of the native communities; the second preferred the course of strengthening and perfecting the rule of the native authorities themselves, with the European official acting as “guide, philosopher, and friend.” Then there was the question of land tenure. Should native customary law be preserved, or should British law be gradually introduced to replace the native system? All these questions were under debate, and on the right solutions being reached depended very largely the future welfare of the country.

Now on all these questions Morel had thought and studied deeply. He had been writing on them for years. He was recognized as one of the greatest living authorities on these subjects, and for some time those British officials (and there were a great many of them) who favoured the adoption of a liberal and progressive policy towards the natives had been urging him to pay the protectorate a visit and to give the right lead at this important moment.

**Special Correspondent of the "Times."**

Armed, therefore, with a commission as Special Correspondent of the *Times* and the *Manchester Guardian*, Morel started on a journey which was to produce valuable fruit. "I know," wrote Mr. Walter, then proprietor of the *Times*, "that you will take an independent and impartial line in the articles which you propose to write. We shall read them with great interest." And here it may be said that, on the subsequent appearance of these articles, the *Times* gave continuous support in its editorial columns to the views Morel had formulated on Nigeria and its problems.

These articles attracted wide attention, and were subsequently republished in book form (*Nigeria : its Peoples and its Problems*, Smith, Elder & Co.). Never, in a sense, had Morel found a subject more congenial. Here was a land of which he had written for years—yet had never before seen. Its history he had studied as few living men had done. Its flora and fauna, its products and industries, its native tribes and customs, its scenery—through wide reading, and countless conversations with officials, natives, and travellers—were almost as familiar to him as those of Britain. Yet until then a personal visit to see these things himself had been denied him. And on coming to this land, so familiar yet so new, he found—and this was the finest thing of all—men there who for years had been pursuing on the spot the very policy for which he had been labouring with pen and voice in Europe. So naturally he put his whole strength into the task of making the work of these men, and the aims they cherished, as widely known and appreciated by the public at home as possible. The result was one of the best books on Africa—certainly the best on Nigeria—ever published, and one which won for Morel the gratitude of the men who were labouring throughout

that great territory for the welfare and prosperity of Nigeria. Amongst Morel's most cherished possessions are letters written to him by many of these British officials thanking him for writing this book. The following are a few typical extracts :—

“ I cannot tell you what a great help your articles have been to all those who are endeavouring to secure the interests and welfare of the natives.”

“ We can't thank you enough. You are well remembered here. When I spoke of you, and asked the Mallams (Mohammedan chiefs) if they remembered you, they at once said, ‘ Oh yes ! Bature maiiou sossiai ’ (i.e. the white man with the straight eye).”

“ All of us owe you a debt of gratitude.”

“ Your book is a joy to read and re-read.”

“ Your book stands alone as a weighty and reasoned statement of the problems we have to grapple with.”

“ Your valuable and sympathetic support is most helpful, and urges us to greater efforts.”

“ I have just got back home, and have been reading your articles. May I tender my sincere congratulations on them, and their, at present, hardly estimable benefit to this country ? ”

“ I had the great pleasure the other day of reading your book. I must add my speck to the mass of gratitude and appreciation you must have received. I have been envying you the chance and the power of speaking out fearlessly about the things that we have to skate cautiously round, and you have made such splendid use of that opportunity.”

The book was equally well received by the Press. “ Of distinctive value to the student and administrator,” said the *Times*; “ a study in applied anthropology—a most fascinating study which we heartily recommend to all who are interested in the problems of Empire ” (*Morning Post*) ; “ will undoubtedly be valued by the officials of all civilized Governments dealing . . . largely with the opening up of tropical Africa ” (Sir Harry Johnston in the *Daily Chronicle*) ; “ will . . . rank as a standard authority on tropical administration ” (*the Economist*) ; “ though humanitarian in principle, the book

is free from that detestable narrowness of outlook which renders many humanitarian proposals incompatible with colonial progress" (*the Academy*). Thus ran the reviews. Those readers who have heard Morel accused of possessing an anti-British bias will be surprised to read the following quotation from that highly patriotic weekly, the *Outlook* :—

"Mr. Morel's book is especially valuable. It is a searching investigation from which the British rulers of Nigeria emerge with honours so thick upon them that we fear some who know what Mr. Morel has said of, and done in, another part of Africa will think he is a mere creature of patriotic prejudice."

In this book Morel pursued his familiar line of argument regarding the African native. He attacked the school "whose doctrine it is that in the economic development of the country the profits should be the exclusive appanage of the white race, the native's rôle being that of labourer and wage-earner for all time,"<sup>2</sup> and the school which, with the best intentions in the world, desired to "Europeanize" and "denationalize" the West African, to bestow upon him "European culture, law, religion, and dress," and to unmake him as an African. "In the form it at present takes," said Morel, "this is not a kindness, but a cruel wrong."<sup>3</sup>

"Between the two schools of thought," he continued, "there is room for a third—one which, taking note to-day that the West African is a landowner, desires that he shall continue to be one under British rule, and not with decreasing but with increasing security of tenure .? . which sees in the preservation of the West African's land for him and his descendants; in a system of education which shall not anglicize; in technical instruction; in assisting and encouraging agriculture, local industries and scientific forestry; in introducing labour-saving appliances, and in strengthening all that is best, materially and spiritually, in aboriginal institutions, the highest duties of our Imperial rule: a school of thought whose aim it is to see Nigeria, at least become in time, the home of highly

<sup>2</sup> *Nigeria*, p. xviii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. xix.

trained African peoples, protected in their property and in their rights by the paramount Power, proud of their institutions, proud of their race, proud of their own fertile and beautiful land.”<sup>4</sup>

“Mr Morel,” said *Truth*, “has, I think, thoroughly made out his case for the civilization of the negro races on their own lines of development, as against the two schools of thought—the ‘damned nigger’ school, which would make him a hewer of wood and a drawer of water for all time, and those who would make him in a moment a twentieth-century European Christian. Indeed, I have never read a book which puts the point of view of the inarticulate negro races themselves so adequately, temperately, and conclusively.”

Morel received many proofs during his journey of the grateful way in which the articulate African regarded him for his work on behalf of the natives. On his return from Northern to Southern Nigeria he was entertained at a banquet by the native community in Lagos, this function being preceded by a meeting presided over by the senior native member of the Legislative Council and attended by all the leading men of the community. Some of the tributes he received were as unexpected as they were touching. Thus, at Abeokuta, the capital of the Egba country (Southern Nigeria), on visiting the Roman Catholic schools in company with the French Father who directed them, Morel was the recipient of addresses read to him respectively by the head boy and the head girl of the class. At Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, on his return journey, arrangements had been made for a demonstration in his honour in the Wilberforce Hall, over which the Mayor of Freetown was to have presided. Owing, however, to the short period the steamer remained in harbour, this ceremony did not take place, but Morel had time to confront, in the residence of that venerable negro scholar, the late Dr. Blyden, some forty Mohammedan chiefs, in gorgeous apparel, some of whom had travelled considerable distances to see him, and who had waited

<sup>4</sup> *Nigeria*, pp. xxi-xxii.

for days in Freetown for his arrival. By these also he was presented with addresses, to which he had to make a suitable reply.

Here is an extract from one of these addresses, which is interesting as showing the African point of view :—

“ Your labour, Sir, is unique. A fight against your own people for aliens, not even of the same race, inhabiting countries thousands of miles away from you, and that at the risk of losing the goodwill and interest and esteem of your own brethren, is humanly speaking, unnatural. Hence we take it to be from God. And we class you among the few whom He has at all times reserved for Himself to carry out His purpose and maintain His honour among the nations of the world.”

### **Member of West African Lands Committee.**

In 1911 Morel was invited by the Secretary of State for the Colonies (the Right. Hon. Lewis Harcourt, M.P.) to become a member of the West African Lands Committee, appointed, under the chairmanship of Sir Kenelm Digby, to examine and report upon the system of land tenure prevailing among the native races of our tropical African Protectorates.

The events preceding the appointment of this Committee, and Morel's part in them, need a word or so of explanation here.

In their legislation affecting “ native rights in land ” in the Gold Coast Protectorate the British Government, although laying no claim to the land themselves, had done nothing to prevent the native chiefs alienating it to individual Europeans. Up to 1910 the danger to the welfare of the natives involved by this attitude had not been an appreciable one, as the attraction of the Gold Coast for Europeans had been its gold deposits, and, in leasing to them the right to exploit the mineral wealth of the country, the native chiefs had not parted with the rights of their people to the land itself. Moreover, a

Concessions Court regulated these transactions and ensured native participation in the profits.

But in 1910 events took place which gave an entirely different complexion to this matter. As a result of the great rubber boom and the increasing demand for vegetable oils, a swarm of speculators descended upon the country, and upon other parts of British West Africa, and, acting more often than not through the medium of certain educated natives in the coast towns, induced the chiefs, in some cases for considerable, in others for insignificant, sums, to barter away the rights of the present and future generations of their peoples over immense surfaces, the chiefs acting in this way sometimes from short-sighted cupidity, but more often than not in entire ignorance of what they were doing.

### Morel's Vigorous Action.

On becoming acquainted with these facts Morel acted with vigour. In various issues of the *African Mail* he repeatedly drew the attention of his readers to what was going on, he got into communication with certain enlightened African acquaintances, he contrived to get questions asked in Parliament upon the matter, and finally wrote to Lord Crewe, then Secretary of State for the Colonies.

"I cannot believe," he said, "that His Majesty's Government, who have given so many proofs of their desire to pursue a just and wise policy towards the native races of West Africa, can be consenting parties to the process whereby the economic future and consequently the social rights of the natives of the Gold Coast are being seriously jeopardized. Nor, I venture to suggest, can a system which, under the spurious plan of 'development,' tends to reduce the native of the Gold Coast from a trader and agriculturist in his own right to the dead level of the hired labourer at one-and-threepence a day, make for the public interest of the dependency or the success of the British administration. 'Development' of this character may enrich a handful of British company-promoters and shareholders. It must impoverish the protected subject races of Great

Britain in West Africa by paralysing native initiative, progress and production ; lay the basis in this region for economic servitude instead of free expression ; react adversely upon the British industries concerned in supplying the requirements of the West African, and, eventually, threaten the prosperity of the British dependencies."

To this communication the Colonial Secretary replied that he was alive to the danger, and was requesting the Governor of the Gold Coast to furnish him with a report.

In the meantime the evil rapidly developed, and with its development Morel redoubled his activity, bombarding the Press with letters and the Colonial Office with incessant representations, and inspiring question after question in Parliament, until at last Mr. Harcourt, who had succeeded Lord Crewe as Colonial Secretary, despatched a special Commission to the Gold Coast to make enquiries. The report of this Commission testified to the accuracy of Morel's warnings and wholly justified his action.

### Work on the Committee.

By this time Parliamentary interest in the matter had been thoroughly aroused, amongst those taking up the question being Mr. (now Colonel) J. C. Wedgwood, M.P., and, following upon a private deputation to Mr. Harcourt, the Colonial Secretary, as already stated, appointed the West African Lands Committee, Morel and Mr. Wedgwood being specially invited to serve upon it. In addition to Sir Kenelm Digby, its chairman, the Committee included several high authorities on Colonial Law and Administration, amongst them being Sir Walter Napier, formerly Attorney-General of the Straits Settlements, Sir Frederick Hodgson, an ex-Governor of the Gold Coast, and Sir William Taylor, formerly Resident General of the Federated Malay States.

The Committee was appointed on June 20, 1912, and was still sitting when the war broke out. By that time

the Draft Report had been almost completed, and a Sub-Committee, consisting of Sir Walter Napier, Sir Frederick Hodgson, and Morel, which had been appointed to revise Part II, sat on for six months longer and completed the whole document, which bears their joint signatures. It has not yet been presented to Parliament, but the labours of the Committee have been recorded "for use of the Colonial Office" in four bulky foolscap volumes, two of which, containing the evidence given before the Committee by a large number of witnesses—African chiefs from Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, and the Gambia; officials, merchants, concessionaires, and so on—have been placed in the library of the House of Commons. It is to be hoped that one day the British Government will rescue this report from the obscurity to which it was consigned during the war, for not only does it constitute what is virtually a charter of native rights for the tropical regions of Africa, but the memorandum by Morel on "the occupation of land by native communities in West Africa" is considered by high authorities to whom it has been shown to be one of the most valuable theses on the administrative policy appropriate to those regions that has ever been penned.

"The conception," he wrote in this memorandum,<sup>5</sup> "which underlies native policy in British West Africa, and probably throughout the whole of tropical Africa, is that the land is *the common inheritance of the whole people*, but that the individual is entitled to benefit from his improvements, and enjoys fixity of tenure unless he offends against the State or community. The name which may be most fittingly used in the English tongue to describe this conception of the part which land plays in the sociology of African peoples is comparatively unimportant. What is important to bear in mind is this governing principle of native ideas, viz. that the land is God-given like air and water, and that every human being is entitled to a share of it in order to sustain life. This is really what is meant when we are told that there is no land without 'an

<sup>5</sup> See also pp. 43 and 44.

owner.' It is a symbolism. . . . A rigidity is apt to be given to the terms 'communal ownership' and 'individual ownership' which is absent from the native conception of land tenure. It is too readily assumed that what we describe as 'individual ownership' is something wholly foreign to the native idea, because individual ownership involves in our eyes the right of the individual *to part with his land for ever*. But this is to misconceive fundamentally the real character of native tenure. Short of a right of irrevocable alienation from the community—which native custom absolutely forbids, which is, indeed, inconceivable in native eyes—the native system of tenure recognizes the existence of private property in land in this sense, that it fully admits perpetuity of tenure vested in groups of individuals—families—and in the individual as a member of the family, subject to the authority of the head of the family. It is not a communal system of tenure in our interpretation of the term. Individuals forming part of Family A cannot farm the lands of Family B at their own sweet will and pleasure, which under a system of strict communalism they would be able to do. Just as soon as uncultivated land comes into cultivation it ceases, under the native system, to be communal as we use the word. It becomes to all intents and purposes the property of the human group cultivating it, whose interests under the patriarchal system of society, which is the foundation of the native social structure, are supervised by the head of the group. The latter can only turn an individual out of the plot he is cultivating for an offence against the community. That he can do so proves the ultimate retention of the land in the community. In one sense, therefore, every individual in the family is the possessor of land; and to that extent there is individual ownership. *But the land is not his to dispose of*, and merges, at his death, in the family of which he is a unit. In that sense the land is communal, the 'family' being a section of the wider community. When land is uncultivated the community as a whole is the owner of it, and never ceases to be the owner of it, in the ultimate resort, when sections of it are cultivated by 'families'; but the families and the individuals composing each family benefit by their cultivation and are undisturbed in their tenure unless they offend against the laws of the community. The native system, in fine, is the system towards which people of Western Europe are gravitating with halting footsteps. I can imagine nothing less defendable morally than a policy directed or tolerated by a European administration in Africa which would shatter this native system where it happily exists."

As will be gathered from a perusal of previous chapters, Morel's view was that the basic principle for the guidance

of European administrations in tropical Africa should be the recognition that the land of the country belonged to the people of the country, i.e. to the native population, and that the primary object of such administration should be the preservation and strengthening of that conception, the prevention of the permanent alienation of the land to Europeans or European syndicates, and the taking of such measures as might be necessary to make it impossible for individual nations, under the influence of imported European conceptions of land tenure, to violate their own system by starting the practice of buying and selling land. Such a practice, he contended, would lead to

"wholesale mortgaging, the grip of the money-lender, the creation of a landless class (which he believes to be the curse of European civilization), with resultant poverty—now unknown—the inevitable decay of native industries, the conversion of a land-possessing population into labourers, the crumbling of the native social structure with all its long legacy of misery and chaos. . . . The native system of tenure allows of private property in land, minus the power of sale, and under the native system an arboricultural tropical industry has grown up unparalleled in the world."<sup>6</sup>

Whilst Morel was engaged on this important work certain rumours were circulated by some of his opponents to the effect that he was using his influence on the Committee in support of a policy which was the exact antithesis of that for which he was, as a fact, strenuously contending. Morel was precluded by his official position from issuing a formal denial of the truth of these rumours, but a way out of the difficulty was found by means of a public exchange of correspondence with Viscount Harcourt.

In a letter to Morel, dated October 23, 1915, the Secretary of State wrote :—

"No proposal to transfer the ownership of the land from the native communities to the Crown has ever been made to me by

<sup>6</sup> Memorandum written for the Colonial Office in 1912.

you ; and I may add that I find it difficult to believe that any one familiar with your record of work in defence of native rights could entertain for a moment the notion that such suggestions could have come from you."

### Opposition Aroused.

Morel, by his activities in connection with this question, naturally incurred the opposition of powerful vested interests. There was the oil and soap interest, for example, which desired to acquire the virtual ownership of the oil-palm districts of the Gold Coast in order to obtain their raw materials at about one-tenth of their cost under the free-trading system by which the natives worked their own forests and sold their produce to competing European merchants, and there were the City interests which had watched with interested and speculative eyes the spectacle of the natives of Ashanti and the Gold Coast converting, by their own unaided activity, great areas of "bush" into cocoa farms, disposing of the fruits of their industry as free men and growing, as a consequence, rapidly wealthier. (The Gold Coast cocoa industry is, indeed, one of the romances of modern times, and a standing illustration of what the African native can accomplish under his indigenous system of land ownership and collective labour. Under this system the Gold Coast has become one of the finest cocoa-producing countries of the world, and this without the aid of European capital with its accompaniments of company-promoting and stock-jobbing in Europe and indentured labour in Africa ; without, in fact, any aid at all, save that provided by the Agricultural Department of the Gold Coast Government and such model farms as those which Messrs. Cadbury in recent years have established in one or two parts of the country.) To transform this thriving native industry into one controlled and managed by European capitalists and to transform the free native cultivator

into a wage-slave—that was the plan. Governmental apathy, the covetousness and ignorance of native chiefs, the intrigues of a number of educated natives in the coast towns, the absence of any law prohibiting individual native farmers from parting with their land, and thus breaking up the system of collective ownership which was the basis of native society and its safeguard from disintegration—these constituted the avenues through which the vested interests at home hoped to attain their ends. But even the best laid plans of capitalists and financiers “gang aft agley,” and when these gentlemen attempted to carry out their schemes they found their path blocked, to their extreme annoyance, by the same obstinate individual who had faced and outfought Leopold II.

For this annoyance they had some cause, for, shortly after the Committee had begun its sittings, the process of allowing “concessions” of the character described was entirely stopped, whereat one of the financiers concerned, apparently confident of his ability to remove the obstruction, sought a personal interview with Morel—to whose malign influence he attributed the “blocking process” which he and his friends were experiencing. But alas, even wealth has its limitations, and after a lengthy conversation, in which he completely failed to soften the hard heart of his “persecutor,” the financier—a prominent politician—departed in high dudgeon. Should Morel ever be induced to tell the inner story of the West African Lands Committee it might make curious and instructive reading !

### Sir Percy Girouard's Tribute.

In May 1912 Morel delivered a lecture on “Nigeria” before the Royal Society of Arts, for which he was subsequently awarded the Society’s Silver Medal. The

chairman of the meeting was Sir Percy Girouard, for two years Governor of Northern Nigeria. In introducing the lecturer, Sir Percy said (*Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, May 10, 1912) that Morel "needed no introduction to a British or indeed any audience. His devotion to African interests, his single-mindedness in contest, and his achievements for African advancement were very well known to all. As a result of his visit to Nigeria a series of brilliant articles appeared in the public Press bearing upon the progress, the past and the future of the two Nigerias. These articles were expanded into a book which certainly was to-day almost a standard treatise upon the mental, moral, and manual work, which had been accomplished in Nigeria, particularly within the last ten years."

### The Treatment of Coloured Races.

Morel further set forth his views on the treatment of coloured races in a paper read at the Church Congress at Southampton on October 2, 1913. In this paper he urged, as many times before, that the true way of governing tropical peoples was to help those peoples to govern themselves. We should not destroy customs and institutions, which, although differing from our own, might be far more suitable to the genius of the peoples concerned. There was "no moral justification" and, ultimately, "no utilitarian advantage," "in depriving a primitive people of its natural sources of commercial wealth on the plea that it is not at a given moment sufficiently instructed in mechanical devices to extract the fullest use therefrom for the world's benefit." Nor must we force loans upon the rulers of these peoples "in the interest of cosmopolitan finance, and for the greater profit of armament firms." The "exploitation of the coloured peoples" was "not merely immoral,

but anti-economic." Both the "damned nigger school" and the school which indicted "every form of European commercial enterprise in the tropics as necessarily" fatal to the liberties of the natives were in error. The native should be "a free man, freely utilizing his land and its resources in common with the white man; his incentive, not coercion, but trade." Further, the old unquestioning ascendancy of the white over the coloured races was disappearing, and the day was approaching when the basis of white rule must rest as greatly "upon consent as upon force."

### Africa and the War.

Twelve months later came the Great War, and it will be convenient in this chapter to refer to Morel's views on the African problems arising out of the conflict. These views were set forth in a small book entitled *Africa and the Peace of Europe* (National Labour Press), published in the spring of 1917, and in a speech delivered at the National Liberal Club on April 24th of the same year. Both in the book and in the speech he alluded to the danger that European politicians, in an effort to reduce the financial burden of the war, might "succumb to the temptation of exploiting the labour of the coloured races," and he vigorously attacked the proposal put forward by the Empire Resources Development Committee "to vest in the State the land and the products of the land of British-protected Africa, both of which belong . . . to the African communities concerned; and to utilize, through the media of large joint-stock corporations, African labour for the relief of the British tax-payer."<sup>7</sup>

"Here," he said, "we have a direct appeal for the appropriation by the British State of the land belonging to African peoples, for whom the British State is

<sup>7</sup> Preface to *Africa and the Peace of Europe*.

trustee, and for the exploitation of its resources by the British State in order to reduce the War Debt . . . and, incidentally, to secure handsome returns for capital invested. Particular stress is laid upon the natural wealth of British West Africa in the produce of the oil-palms, of which it is said that they are *our property*, and an asset to be worked for the Empire.”<sup>8</sup>

“It is a proposal,” he exclaimed, “to set the clock back three hundred years. . . . It is the suggested application to British tropical Africa of the identical principles which formed the juridical basis of the policy inaugurated by Leopold II on the Congo.”<sup>9</sup> And again: “For the British State to step in and claim the whole of the land of British West Africa and what it produces would be an act of expropriation comparable only in recent years to the Leopoldian regime. . . . This scheme comes before us backed by immense vested interests.”<sup>10</sup> And he warned his hearers that they were “up against the biggest thing” they had ever tackled. “Mr. Morel’s attacks,” said Sir Harry Johnston, writing in *War and Peace*, “are justified on the insidious projects recently circulated by which, through victory in the war, negro Africa virtually becomes enthralled by small or secret bodies of men in Britain, France, Belgium, and Portugal, and the commerce of the world outside those Powers has little or no chance of fair treatment in one of the most productive areas of the world’s surface.”

To any one such as Morel, deeply interested in the welfare of the African native and in problems of colonial administration, one of the most heartbreaking sides of the European war, and one which naturally was little known to the general public, was the introduction of the world-conflict into tropical Africa.

<sup>8</sup> *Africa and the Peace of Europe.*      <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Speech at the Anti-Slavery Society meeting.

"Native tribes," said Morel, "have been dragooned and suborned into taking sides with this or that belligerent, and helped with modern rifles. Inter-tribal warfare, with all its crude horrors, has been revived on a far more comprehensive scale. . . . The resources of entire districts have been ruthlessly destroyed, to prevent the enemy obtaining supplies. . . . Devastation, massacre and ruin have characterized the importation of European animosities into primitive Africa. The work of years has been undone. And it is with feelings bordering upon anguish that officials whose conception of the white man's duties to the African, and the value of the white man's moral example in dealing with these primitive and semi-primitive peoples, was a high one, contemplate the wreckage of their earnest labours. As for the psychological effect upon the African's mind . . . of the killing of white men (those semi-supernatural beings) by Africans in Africa, at the instigation of other white men, and with weapons furnished them for the purpose—prowesses which henceforth will be the theme of African camp-fires and chronicled in the message of African drums—well, ask any experienced African administrator, and if he is disposed to speak his mind freely to you, you will appreciate perhaps the sort of ingredients stirring in the devil's cauldron which the folly of Europe has brewed in Africa."<sup>11</sup>

### Proposed Neutralization of Non-Colonizable Africa.

In *Africa and the Peace of Europe* Morel put forward certain proposals which he believed would "lay the foundation of such an international treatment of the African problem as will eliminate one of the active causes of European unrest" and at the same time spare the African natives from any repetition of the scenes referred to in the preceding paragraph.

"The means to this end," he said, "are plainly indicated. They would consist in neutralizing the greater part of Africa, and in internationalizing commercial activites within the neutralized area.

"By neutralization I mean the removal of the greater part of Africa, by mutual consent, from the operations of European war.

"By the internationalization of commercial activities I mean that, irrespective of the distribution of sovereign rights, the nationals of all European states shall be entitled to compete on equal terms in every form of commercial activity throughout the neutralized area."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Africa and the Peace of Europe*, p. 69.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p. 70.

Roughly speaking, the territory Morel proposed to neutralize covered the whole of non-colonizable Africa. In fact it covered the whole of Africa with the exception of Egypt, Tripoli and Tunis, Algeria, Morocco and the Spanish Soudan (Mauretania) in the north, Abyssinia in the east, and the Union of South Africa and German South-West Africa in the south. And, besides being neutralized, Morel proposed that the whole of this vast area should be a Free Trade zone, that, as far as commercial activities were concerned, every nation should have equal access to it. Such an arrangement, he suggested, should be secured by a "collective guarantee, in which the United States and all the European Powers, belligerent and neutral, should participate." "And if the South American Powers," he added, "and the great independent Asiatic Powers—Japan and China—were brought in also, it would be all to the good."<sup>13</sup>

"Of this I am profoundly convinced," he said, "a solution of the African problem on some such lines . . . is an essential ingredient in the mortar required to lay the structural foundations of a lasting peace in Europe";<sup>14</sup> and he further urged that a Charter of Native Rights should be drawn up, which "could be subscribed to by all the Powers," and which would help to safeguard the interests of the native races of Africa.

<sup>13</sup> *Africa and the Peace of Europe*, p. 72.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 96. Morel's views expressed in this book on the future of the German African colonies are more properly dealt with in Chapter XXI.

## CHAPTER XIV

### VICTORY

Public presentation—A representative gathering—The Bishop of Winchester's letter—Tributes from Lord Cromer, M. Vandervelde, M. Pierre Mille, M. Felicien Challaye, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and others—Morel's reply—A strangely significant utterance—Reforms conceded—"We have won, gentlemen"—Triumph of the Reform Movement—The native freed—Final meeting of the Association—Glowing tributes to Morel—The Archbishop of York—Lord Aberdeen—Sir Valentine Chirol—Sir Gilbert Parker—The Bishop of Winchester—Dr. Clifford—Sir Harry Johnston—The Rev. Scott Liddett—The Earl of Mayo—"Invaluable services to the British people"—Robert Donald of the *Daily Chronicle*—The *Morning Post*—The *Daily News*—The *Evening Standard*—Compared to Wilberforce—Morel's three motives: Native Rights, Freedom of Trade, Peace—"A great peace crusade"—An impressive speech.

IN July 1910 a letter signed by Lord Cromer appeared in the Press announcing the formation of a Committee—consisting of Dr. Talbot (then Bishop of Southwark, now Bishop of Winchester), the Rev. Sylvester Horne, M.P., Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sir William Crossley, M.P., and Lady Frederick Cavendish—for the purpose of organizing a public presentation to Morel in recognition of his efforts in the cause of humanity.

The appeal was warmly supported by Press and public, and the presentation was made at a public luncheon in the Whitehall Rooms on May 29, 1911.

It was a remarkable gathering. In the absence, owing to illness, of the Bishop of Winchester, Lord Cromer presided over an assembly which, as the *Daily News*

remarked the next day, "was strikingly representative —non-party, unsectarian, international."

"Its representative character," said another journal,<sup>1</sup> was what struck one most about the meeting. It was a gathering not only of all parties and all creeds in the country, but of many nations. Wherever one turned one saw some face well known in public life. Literature was represented by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, . . . Sir Gilbert Parker, M.P., Mrs. John Richard Green, Sir Percy Bunting, Mr. St. Loe Strachey, Anthony Hope Hawkins, Mr. Stead and Silas Hocking. The Mayor of Birkenhead was resplendent in his chain of office. The Churches added their tribute through Bishop Taylor Smith, Canon Barnett, the Rev. Silvester Horne, M.P., Dr. Scott Lidgett, and many others too numerous to mention. Politics, the Press, Commerce, were all well represented. Other countries sent distinguished guests. Belgium sent the eloquent Labour leader Emile Vandervelde; France sent Pierre Mille, President of the International Congo League, and Felicien Challaye, of the French Congo League. Germany, Switzerland and the United States were all present in their representatives. Africa joined in the demonstration, four or five ebony faces adding a picturesque touch of colour to the occasion. . . ."

### A Hero's Work.

Prevented by illness from presiding at the luncheon, the Bishop of Winchester sent an eloquent letter:—

"I should have counted it," he writes, "as one of the most genuine honours of my life to fill that chair. I do not expect ever to have a second quite like it. . . .

"I believe Mr. Morel to have done a hero's work, with a hero's motive and a hero's courage, and across difficulties which make a hero's task never more difficult than in our complex modern day. . . . I am not ashamed to believe and say that for a great moral emergency the providence of God gave us the man.

"With unswerving zeal Mr. Morel followed up and tracked out the facts. With incredible patience and unblundering thoroughness and skill, without shrinking from the weariness of constant insistence and repetition, with untiring use of a pen which cut like steel through pretences and evasions and falsehoods, he compelled us to hear and understand and judge, he fought his way through to the attention of the slow but honest conscience of the nation.

<sup>1</sup> *The Baptist Times*, June 2, 1911.

"In doing this, he ran tremendous risks: risks of life and of the means of living, risks of reputation and position, far greater than are publicly known or can be publicly said. He had against him enormous material forces, and forces whose moral unscrupulousness has become a byword. He had against him, too, all the weight of inertia, preoccupation and indifference, international and other.

"We ourselves, who applaud him to-day, were watching him carefully for the signs of the fanatic or the intriguer. These signs we never found. . . . We perceived that he not merely described atrocities, or denounced crimes, but that he kept steadily before him an ideal sound, practical, truly commercial, but above all really just, of European conduct to the races of Africa. We saw that his antagonism was not to this or that abuse, but to a system which was in every respect the defiant opposite of what his conscience and reason taught him to regard as alone possible and tolerable for the civilized action of Europe to-day. . . .

"His was a great achievement. . . . It was, as I believe, one of those achievements which become part of our permanent moral capital. The world's battle against slavery is not yet fought out . . . the forces of cruel and selfish exploitation will not easily be curbed or trodden under. God grant us Morels from time to time to fight them, as this one has been fought, . . . by the friend to whom I desire to join you and our welcome guests from abroad in toasting with affection and honour."

### **Lord Cromer's Tribute.**

"Mr. Morel," said Lord Cromer in the opening speech, "has stormed the citadel, not only of British but of European opinion. Without his indomitable energy, without his perseverance, without his disinterestedness and his unbounded enthusiasm, it is perhaps open to considerable doubt whether the reform of the Congo would have been taken in hand at all."

But perhaps the most noteworthy of the tributes to Morel's work on this occasion were those paid by M. Emile Vandervelde, the leader of the Belgian Socialist party, and two Frenchmen, M. Pierre Mille, President for France of the International League for the Defence of the Natives of the Congo Basin, and M. Felicien Challaye,

President of the French League for the Defence of the Natives of the Congo Basin.

The speeches of these three distinguished visitors, so far as they relate to Morel's central contention in his long campaign against the concessionaire system in tropical Africa, have already been referred to.<sup>2</sup> The following extracts, which are of a more personal nature, have not, however, been given before :—

“ It is with all my heart,” declared M. Vandervelde, “ that I associate myself with you to render homage to E. D. Morel, in the name of my country, which is beginning to do him justice, and in the name of the natives of the Congo also. . . . ”

“ It will perhaps be the best and most honourable remembrance of my life to have been at his side, to have shared with him in some part the attacks, the outrageous charges, the calumnies with which he has been deluged. . . . ”

“ If I have done anything, it has been through following his advice and being inspired by his example. . . . ”

“ To-day we salute Morel as the organizer of victory, the pioneer workman ; he who was already striving while others slept, he who compelled the blind to see, the deaf to hear, he who has saved the peoples of the Congo by appealing incessantly, indefatigably to the conscience of the civilized world. Thanks, Morel, in the name of Belgium ! Thanks in the name of the natives ! ”

“ There are friendships,” said M. Pierre Mille, “ which include both respect and admiration. The friendship I have for Morel is of that kind. . . . I have admired his great heart, his generosity, his disinterestedness, his magnificent energy ; and I have admired, also, the country to which he belongs. In England, when a man stands up against injustice and crime, you do not meet with individuals who, acting for I do not know what vile personal interests, accuse him of being venal. You find still less in this country idiots to believe in it. . . . I salute Morel because he has been the heroic promoter of a great human work. I salute England. . . . I console myself a little with the thought that in the veins of Morel there flows some French blood.”

A most eloquent tribute was that paid to Morel by M. Felicien Challaye :—

“ I am happy to bring to him,” he said, “ the homage of France, of the better France. The qualities which he has shown in this

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter V.

struggle are amongst those which are most calculated to impress the French spirit, such as the centuries have formed it. The France of St. Louis can salute this apostle of the latest of the crusades ; the France of Corneille can exalt his heroism, classic in its nature ; the France of the Revolution can acclaim this great revolutionary who succeeded in suppressing from the map of the world a State, a tyranny, a despotism—the most odious of tyrannies, the most abject of despotisms ; Napoleonic France can applaud the courage which he showed in this struggle and in this labour ; the France of the twentieth century must admire in him the harmony of the qualities which appeal to us to-day as the highest of human virtues, the love of truth, and the passion for justice."

### A Significant Speech.

Following upon speeches by Mr. Alfred Emmott, M.P. (now Lord Emmott), the Rev. Sylvester Horne, Mr. Fabian Ware, editor of the *Morning Post*—who said of Morel : "I have never seen such a fighter. . . . There is no position in diplomacy that Mr. Morel could not fill with distinction"—M. René Claparède, and Herr Ludwig Dueus, Presidents respectively of the Swiss and German Leagues for the Defence of the Natives of the Congo Basin, and Mr. Robert Whyte, of the American Presbyterian Missionary Society, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle presented Morel with a cheque for 4,000 guineas and a bronze statuette of a Congo chief by Mr. Herbert Ward, and Mrs. Morel with a jewel and a portrait of her husband by Mr. William Rothenstein.

In returning thanks Morel used words which later events have touched with a strange significance :—

"We are all watching to-day," he said, "the advance—the astounding advance if we cast our minds back but a few years—of a great ideal which seeks to substitute something more Christian and more rational than the sword as the arbiter of disputes between various sections of the white race—beginning with the two great sister nations. Some may think its eventual realization impossible. Others will feel that its progress is swaying vast and, for the most part, silent masses of men as perhaps they have never been swayed before, with a common hope and a common longing. None will

deny that the subject has now become one of world-wide discussion, not among idealists or enthusiasts only, but among practical statesmen.

"That in itself is a very wonderful thing, and if this wonderful thing has come about, is it not possible, I would ask, for an actual understanding to be reached affecting many millions of another race for whose destinies the white race is responsible, and presenting infinitely fewer difficulties to realize ? "

### The Future of Tropical Africa.

Turning to the future of tropical Africa, Morel said :—

"Between the White Nile and Zanzibar, between Zanzibar and Senegal, between the Sahara and the Gulf of Guinea, lies that vast belt of Equatorial Africa which must emphatically be considered the black man's country.

"This enormous region, as large as Europe, has two peculiarities. . . .

"It is one of the greatest, if not the greatest, storehouses of vegetable riches in the world. Its people are on the whole . . . the most helpless in the world in the face of modern engines of coercion.

"Victims for several centuries of the oversea slave trade, they are to-day threatened by the same evil in inverted form. The modern agency . . . aims at their enslavement in their own homes, starting from a basis of confiscation of their land, proceeding to claim the products of that land, and concluding by a claim to dispose of the labour of the country.

"We have seen these agencies, pushed to the full length of their logical sequence, at work in the Congo. . . . The Congo became a forcing house for the propagation of poisonous seeds, seeds which the wind carried hither and thither. . . .

"For the time being the evil has been checked, its most revolting excesses, I hope, altogether destroyed. But it is not killed, and may be expected to work more subtly in the future. I do not think . . . we can fail to detect a revival—among much material prosperity, perhaps on account of it—of the slave spirit in dealing with the coloured races. . . .

"I suggest that the time has come when public opinion should . . . bring organized pressure to bear upon those Governments who between them control the destinies of tropical Africa, with the object of securing that certain broad lines of policy be laid down for the

government of these vast regions. I suggest that . . . a Charter of Rights for the unrepresented millions of the African tropics should be drawn up. . . .”

In Morel's view the peoples of Europe should take the lead in bringing about an International Conference

“based, not upon pious resolutions hiding political ambitions, but upon practical common sense, upon a sentiment of responsibility, with the acquired knowledge of what constitutes for these African peoples, socially, economically and humanly, the just and the indispensable. . . .”

“If this thought . . . found an echo in the minds of the many men of eminence and influence here to-day, the cause of human peace, happiness and progress might be extended to a field where its pressure in constructive form is very greatly needed.”

### “We have Won, Gentlemen.”

Gradually the incessant agitation of years was doing its work. One by one the reforms demanded by Morel and his devoted co-workers were being conceded. One by one the evils which had oppressed the Congo for so long were crumbling away. By May 1913<sup>3</sup> very little was left to be done. The entire Leopoldian policy had been completely abandoned. The atrocities had ceased. The Concessionaire Companies had either vanished or had been reduced to impotence, and with their disappearance the swarms of irregular levies which had terrorized the countryside had also gone. A responsible Government had replaced an irresponsible despotism. The rubber tax had been abolished. Freedom of trade over the greater part of the territory had been restored, and the right of the natives to free access to the land for the purpose of gathering its natural products had been conceded. One or two further points were yet to be secured,

<sup>3</sup> In this month Morel was invited to give an address on the government of tropical Africa at the New University, Brussels, and did so. M. Vandervelde presided.

and an influentially signed memorial was sent to Sir Edward Grey urging that the natives should also be entitled to free access to the land for the purpose of cultivating products such as

"cocoa, rubber, cotton, ground-nuts, maize and other tropical produce."

A few more months of work, a little more diplomatic correspondence with the Foreign Office, and the further matters at issue were conceded, so that, on April 25, 1913, Morel was able to declare that "in view of the immense and steady improvement" which had taken place, the Congo Reform Association would no longer be justified, in his opinion, in opposing the official recognition by the British Government of the annexation.

"We have won, gentlemen," said he, addressing the Executive Committee of his Association. "We have won a victory which, in my humble opinion, has saved the African tropics from a permanent yoke of slavery, greatly improved for good the administration of all responsible Governments in that part of the world, and rescued generations yet unborn from a cruel and destructive fate."

"We have achieved what we started out to accomplish," said Sir Gilbert Parker at the same meeting. "We have got at least decent government on the whole for the natives of the Congo; we have got freedom from slavery and from a tyranny which one may not improperly call a bloody and a cruel tyranny, and in that view . . . I strongly support Mr. Morel's suggestion and advice that we do no longer withhold our approval of the recognition of the annexation."

Following this the British Government decided to recognize officially the Congo as a Belgian colony, and in announcing this decision to the House of Commons

(May 29, 1913) Sir Edward Grey said : " In making the announcement . . . we are happily in a position of doing what is morally right and justifiable, as well as politically expedient. It is not always that these two things go together, but I have always hoped that this long chapter of complaint and trouble in connection with the Congo would be closed in some such way as it has been closed to-day."

### The Final Meeting.

On July 16, 1913, at the Westminster Palace Hotel, the final meeting of the Congo Reform Association was held.

Sir Gilbert Parker, M.P., presided over a notable assembly, which included the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Winchester, and Lord Cromer, whilst messages of congratulation were received from many of the most distinguished men in Britain, France, and Belgium. Of these the following four may be quoted :—

*The Archbishop of York.*—"I cannot allow the opportunity to pass without sending a word of deep gratitude to you for your courageous and persistent advocacy of the claims of the natives of the Congo. . . . It will be a lifelong satisfaction to you to know that it was given to you to do a work so remarkable on behalf of justice and humanity."

*The Earl of Aberdeen, Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland.*—"The farewell proceedings of the Association will surely and rightly consist largely in an offer of a tribute of homage to the man who above all has been the stimulating and guiding force in the movement. He has thus earned a notable place in the true roll of fame, and the name of E. D. Morel will be held in grateful admiration and esteem with the permanence that no titular distinction could secure."

*Sir Valentine Chirol of the "Times."*—"I shall always feel proud to have been able to lend a helping hand, in however small a way, to the admirable work which you undertook with much unselfish devotion, and carried to a successful issue with such conspicuous ability and untiring energy."

*Sir Edward Russell of the Liverpool "Daily Post."*—"There is no one who has a higher idea of your work, or of the heroism and power with which you have pursued it to a successful result. . . . I hope the meeting will be a most triumphant memorial of what has been a magnificent victory over extraordinary and peculiar powers of darkness."

### Tributes to Morel.

It is difficult in such a book as this to convey at all adequately to the reader the remarkable nature of the tributes which were paid to Morel on this occasion by the distinguished speakers. One can but quote a few of them without comment.

*Sir Gilbert Parker, M.P.*—"I believe that through the movement fostered and controlled by this Association, with a sanity that is not always displayed in such movements, there has been revealed to the consciences of the nations of the world a new and vivid sense of the duty of civilized Governments to native races whom they force or invite into the paths of civilization. . . . *But the sanity of the method which has produced this result had its origin in the work of our friend, and the friend of humanity, Mr. E. D. Morel.*"

*The Bishop of Winchester.*—"We have learned . . . that there is in the conscience of humanity, and may I hope and believe more especially in the conscience of British humanity, an immense latent force for zeal, and for truth and humanity, and justice, that wants focusing and precipitating.

"And to do that, what is wanted is the action of a leader of men, who will bring to it devotion, unswerving diligence and industry, the great power of patiently and vividly interpreting to his fellow-men what the real issues are, and who will hold on his way in spite of calumny, in spite of resistance when the cause seems to gain nothing, as well as when the cause has hopes of winning. We have found such a man in this cause. We believe that God raises up such men from time to time. Such men are needed, and we found him for this agitation, this reform, this movement which has been brought to a conclusion. In thanking God for that, we thank the man to whom, I believe, under God, we owe it—E. D. Morel."

*Dr. Clifford.*—"Eternal vigilance is the price of human progress, and it is only as we raise men, or rather, shall I say, as God raises

men like Mr. Morel, heroic in temper, persistent in industry, sagacious in planning, persuasive in advocacy, indomitable in pluck, that it is possible for the evils that afflict humanity to be removed."

*Sir Harry Johnston.*—"The great value of his work has not only been the soul that he put into it, and the passionate declamation that he made in speech and writing, but the great accuracy of his statistics. . . . What this David beat down this Goliath with was the unanswerable accuracy of the facts that he collected to prove his case. . . . Mr. Morel, among other services he has rendered, has brought home to us as a matter of African policy that the best and most profitable way of developing all these regions is to develop them through the races that naturally inhabit them."

*The Rev. Scott Lidgett.*—"It has been great for this man to arrest the British public . . . and to arouse its conscience, and to secure that welding together of churches and parties and of all those who love the well-being of humanity, in a way that has been unprecedented, I think, since perhaps the time when Wilberforce embodied the conscience of England generations ago. . . . We thank God for such a gift to the twentieth century as Mr. Morel. We trust in God's providence that there is some yet greater work, if it be possible, for him to do to keep alive this great fire which he has kindled and to win upon new fields of service the endless gratitude of those who, but for the tenderness of his heart and the chivalry of his character, were ready to perish."

*The Earl of Mayo.*—"Mr. Morel is a fine speaker, a good fellow and a hard worker. I must say that if I was in a tight corner anywhere I should like to have a man like Mr. Morel alongside me. . . . I hope to meet him in some other sphere, and that he will turn his hand to bettering the condition of some other peoples throughout the world in the same way that he has benefited the Congo natives."

*Mr. T. L. Gilmour of the "Morning Post."*—"The first great London daily paper which took up this Congo question was the *Morning Post*. . . . It was my good fortune . . . to bring together Mr. Morel and the man who at that time was in control of the policy of that paper, Mr. Oliver Borthwick, the only son of Lord Glenesk. . . . After Mr. Morel had left, I naturally had a conversation on the subject with Mr. Borthwick, and . . . what he said was this: 'Here is a big sane man with a good case, and we must support him.' . . . How is it that Mr. Morel was able . . . to obtain the support of a paper which . . . is not, I think, . . . influenced by sentimental considerations? It was because . . . he was so particular in always seeing that his facts were accurate. He did not approach this question from the sentimental point of view, but from the point

of view of statesmanship, and I venture to think that the real service which Mr. Morel has rendered to the British people is not limited by his services in connection with the Congo, but extends to a much wider field."

*Mr. Robert Donald, editor of the "Daily Chronicle."*—"I think that one of his (Mr. Morel's) greatest achievements was when he created enthusiasm for his cause in newspaper offices, which are generally full of cynics. . . . As far as the Press of this country is concerned, it had never a better leader or a nobler cause."

*The Rev. C. Wilson, secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society.*—"I think I may venture on behalf of the missionaries to say that it is not a vain hope that as enlightenment spreads in the Congo the people of Africa may come to realize that in the history of their land God raised up a great friend of Africa, the man to whom in this resolution we express our thanks."

### Morel's "Invaluable Services . . . to the British People."

Thus amidst the plaudits of distinguished men and women was Morel in July 1913 thanked for his "invaluable services . . . not only to the natives of the Congo, but to the British people"; thus, amidst well-nigh universal praise from Press and public, was "one of the most remarkable movements that has ever been witnessed in this country"—to quote the *Morning Post*—brought to a triumphant conclusion.

"The Congo Reform Movement," continued the *Morning Post*, "was concerned with a very grave and far-reaching issue. What was really at stake was the whole relationship between the governing nations of Europe and the subject races committed to their charge. Had the system set up by the Congo Free State been allowed to survive, it must in the end have infected with its taint the colonial policy of every Great Power. Sooner or later the example of the ruthless exploitation of the natives of the Congo Basin, in the interests of their foreign rulers, would have been imitated elsewhere, and there would even have been a lowering of the standards of those nations which did not succumb to the worst temptations. It is no exaggeration to say, then, that the Congo Reform Association has done a great work in upholding the

ideals of civilization and in rousing the conscience of Europe to realize the duties which every colonizing Power owes to its subject races."

### Compared to Wilberforce.

From the numerous editorial tributes which were paid to Morel by the Press, we extract two which seem to be of especial interest. This is from the *Daily News and Leader* :—

"The history of [the Congo Reform Association] is largely the history of the courage and determination of one man. . . . It was Mr. E. D. Morel, who will be remembered as having roused the conscience of Europe on the subject, and destroyed the most hideous traffic of modern times. . . . For a long time he fought the battle against Leopold almost single handed. He founded the Congo Reform Association, and through that instrument he forced the subject on the attention of Europe, compelled Leopold to yield, brought about the annexation of the Congo region by Belgium, and succeeded in abolishing the system of forced labour with all its horrors of blood and misery. *It is an achievement which will give him an enduring place among the great deliverers of mankind.* But it will be asked with some bitterness why it was left to a private citizen to right a gigantic wrong, which was known to every Foreign Minister in Europe."

And here is the authentic voice of the *Evening Standard* :—

"Every single word spoken in praise of Mr. Morel at the last meeting of the Congo Reform Association, which he founded, was thoroughly deserved. By his untiring pertinacity in face of a solid wall of obstruction he has made life tolerable, and even happy, for scores of thousands of Congolese who were living in a *Gehenna*. . . . Thanks to him, natives are no longer torn from their villages and dragged off to labour on the railway, and in the gold-mines. For the crime of not getting enough rubber they are no longer lashed with the *chicotte* of raw hippo hide, with edges like knife blades, or packed into rooms like the Black Hole of Calcutta, till their friends bring in enough rubber. Women are no longer forced to walk forty or fifty miles immediately after childbirth, and their husbands do not have their hands lopped off for the same 'crime.' Mr. E. D. Morel, by stirring up the public conscience, has altered all that, and HIS NAME SHOULD GO DOWN TO POSTERITY WITH THAT OF WILBERFORCE."

It was indeed "roses, roses all the way" for Morel in July 1913. One wonders whether, as he sat and listened to the praises showered upon him, any thought of Browning's poem, and its moral, ever passed across his mind. There is no indication of it in the expressive speech which he made on this occasion, a speech which shows clearly the three main motives which animated him—Native Rights, Freedom of Trade, Peace.

"The native of the Congo," said he, "is once more a free man. His elementary human rights have been restored to him. He is free once more to gather the natural products of his soil, and to dispose of them in legitimate trade. He is free to cultivate his land, both for his own sustenance and for the planting of products of economic value for his enrichment. The rubber tax—'the blood tax'—has been abolished. . . .

"Freedom of trade has been reintroduced throughout the Congo and thousands of natives who have fled to the recesses of the forest to escape their tormentors are flocking back to their old settlements on the river bank."

### A Great Peace Crusade.

And just as in his speech at the public presentation two years before he had spoken of the coming of the great ideal which sought to "substitute something more Christian and more rational" for the arbitrament of the sword, so on this final occasion he closed with these solemn and significant words:—

"And so the curtain rings down on our endeavours. In one sense this crusade, waged amid the strife of pens and the clamour of voices . . . has been *a great peace crusade*. We have fought war—dreadful war—war which invaded every village in the Congo and affected every home in every village, and every human unit in every home: war against men, women and little children. Permanent war. War not waged to vindicate the prestige of the white race, war not waged to restore order or to punish crime, but war waged as a system primarily for the enrichment of a handful of individuals. War which filled the sombre equatorial forest with daily and unspeakable tragedies. *And, I would add, war which*

*was known, which had long been known, the purpose of which had long been known, in every Foreign Office in Europe before we knew of it.* Yes, it is true, and it should be said to-day that what all Europe should have taken in hand, what it was the duty of all Europe to have taken in hand, and what Europe did not even attempt to take in hand, this Association, rising as a small cloud on the horizon of a tyrant's will, and gathering the force of a tornado which swept him from his African throne—this Association has been, in a large measure, able itself to accomplish.

"And now that our work as an Association is done, I think we can take leave of one another as we part to-day, not again to re-assemble, with the consciousness that each one of us has done his best to play his allotted part ; with the consciousness that we have all worked together for a common purpose, with unselfishness of aim ; that during this our long companionship in arms we have garnered into the chambers of our hearts some precious seeds of charity, of inspiration and of hope, and that, under the providence of God, we have struck a blow for human justice that cannot and will not pass away."



*PART III*

**THE FIGHT AGAINST WAR**



## CHAPTER XV

### CO-OPERATION OR CONFLICT

Belief in international co-operation—Opposes war with France in 1898—Always anti-Jingo—But dubbed a pro-Frenchman—And praised as a super-patriot—Growing distrust of secret diplomacy—Criticizes Foreign Office methods—A dangerous bureaucracy—The shadow of war—Was an Anglo-German conflict inevitable?—*Morocco in Diplomacy*.

As we have seen, in perusing the earlier chapters of this book, Morel has always been imbued with a firm belief in the virtues of international co-operation, and therefore, as a natural consequence, with a profound detestation of war as a method of “settling” national differences. As far back as 1898, when a young man of twenty-five, he opposed with all his strength the forces which were seeking to drive Britain and France into armed conflict on the subject of West Africa.<sup>1</sup> When the *Daily Mail* was threatening to “roll France in mud and blood” Morel stood out against the clamour, and, whilst admitting, and indeed demonstrating, the general nature of the grievances under which British interests were labouring as the result of French policy in West Africa, he, at the risk of being dubbed a “pro-Frenchman,” pleaded for a calm consideration of these matters and pointed out that the difficulties in question could more easily be removed by the exercise of a little reason and moderation on both sides. “Quite so,” some of his opponents may remark, “always against Britain. The friend of every country but his own!” Not at all. For at the very

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter III.

time that he was opposing the Jingoes in this country who were clamouring for war with France over West Africa he was also opposing the French Jingoes or Chauvinists who were instrumental in sending Major Marchand to Fashoda—an act, in Morel's opinion, of pure aggression. And, as has been mentioned, so highly did he, in his book on Nigeria, praise the work of the British administrators there, that the *Outlook* was actually concerned lest some people should think him "a mere creature of patriotic prejudice." No, to Morel, as to others, a just and honourable peace has ever been one of the "highest of British interests"; indeed, he would probably extend this statement and say that it is one of the highest interests of civilization. So it is not strange that on the triumph of his twelve years' labour in the cause of Congo Reform he should have chosen the very moment of victory to declare, in the presence of many of the highest in the land, that that campaign, in his opinion, was "a great peace crusade."

### **Growing Distrust of Secret Diplomacy.**

In the course of his work for a greater international co-operation in the business of the world, and in particular through his labours for Congo Reform, Morel naturally came into "close contact with the methods of international diplomacy, and with the proceedings of diplomats."

"The experience," he said, "of pursuing a specific aim and steering a single course, in season and out of season, for eleven years on end, through the tortuosities of diplomatic shuffling, of removing one obstacle only to find another in its place, of personal intercourse with diplomatists here and elsewhere, with journalists in their councils and obedient to their will, with permanent officials, Ministers and politicians, and with the flotsam and jetsam which crowd the diplomatic corridors—this experience gave me an insight into the workings of what is called 'diplomacy' granted, I think, to few men outside the ring and not to all within it."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Personal Foreword to *Truth and the War*, p. 37.

And we have seen, as the Congo Reform Movement developed, and as Morel was brought at so many points into intimate relations with the Foreign Office, how he became more and more deeply dissatisfied with the spirit by which that great department of the State was animated, and with the methods by which it conducted its work. That is why his book *Great Britain and the Congo* is of such special interest to all who wish to understand the secret and the consistency of Morel's career. He had seen at close quarters the workings of secret diplomacy, and the sight appalled him. He saw how divorced the Foreign Office was from the great sincerities of existence.

In a striking passage he held up to scorn the official picture "of anxious Ministers, holding innumerable and mysterious strings of the greatest delicacy; of a Government department harassed, but steeped in wisdom, searching with sagacious eye the by-ways of world-polities, bending a penetrating gaze upon the mystic recesses of dark intrigue, moving only when assured of absolute success, loftily indifferent, in the profundity and all-embracing sweep of its trained outlook, to these rash and clamorous voices from outside, beyond the pale of official sapience."<sup>3</sup> He made it clear that, in his opinion, this picture was false in every detail, and that secret diplomacy, instead of being steeped in wisdom, straightforward, and incapable of error, was in reality, narrow, ill-informed, tortuous in its methods, and continually making the most fatuous and humiliating mistakes. Such was the opinion, right or wrong, he had already, in 1909, formed of secret diplomacy.

"It was given me to see behind the veil," he wrote six years later, "and to realize how utterly at the mercy of a bureaucracy working in darkness and in secrecy were the peoples, not of Africa only, but of Europe; a bureaucracy rooted in obsolete traditions, badly informed, out of touch with and supremely indifferent to

<sup>3</sup> *Great Britain and the Congo*, p. 245.

the human pulse, cynically and openly contemptuous of moral conduct, deeming the finest of arts the art successfully to lie, living in a world walled round by narrow prejudices, and absorbed in the prosecution of rivalries for the attainment of objects bearing not the remotest relation to the well-being or fundamental needs of the masses, whose destinies that bureaucracy held in the hollow of its hands.”<sup>4</sup>

### The Shadow of War.

Further, as public feeling in support of Congo Reform deepened and grew in volume, Morel became aware that the reluctance of the Foreign Office to move in the direction towards which public opinion was urging it was due in some considerable measure to the fear lest action on its part should disturb, with disastrous consequences, the delicate balance of international relationships. “If this question,” said Sir Edward Grey (May 27, 1909), “were rashly handled it might make a European question compared to which those which we have had to deal with in the last few months might be child’s play.”<sup>5</sup> Across the fair landscape of the Continent there lay a great shadow—the shadow of impending conflict between the two great armed alliances into which Europe was then divided—a shadow which seemed to be growing slowly deeper. Already, in 1909, there were people who declared that war between England and Germany was, sooner or later, “inevitable.” Morel recognized the existence of the forces which were making for an international conflict, and determined to combat them. The prospect of such an outbreak appalled him. It would, as he clearly saw, set back the clock of civilization for a century. “I believe,” said he, writing on February 29, 1912, “that no greater disaster could befall both peoples, and all that is most worthy of preservation in modern civilization, than a war between them.”<sup>6</sup> But was such a war “inevit-

<sup>4</sup> Personal Foreword to *Truth and the War*, p. xxxvii.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in *Great Britain and the Congo*, p. 238.

<sup>6</sup> Introduction to *Morocco in Diplomacy*.

able"? What were the forces which were making for international enmity in Europe? From what situation did they arise, and could their course be diverted? These were some of the questions which Morel, as soon as his Congo work was accomplished, set himself to answer. The first outcome of his investigations was a series of important articles in British and French newspapers and magazines (including five articles entitled "How Wars are Made" in the *Daily News*, October 1911), and following upon these there came his book, *Morocco in Diplomacy* (Smith, Elder & Co.), which appeared in the spring of 1912.

## CHAPTER XVI

### *MOROCCO IN DIPLOMACY*

An attempt to avert war—The Moroccan question—The secret clauses of 1904—The crisis of 1905—The Kaiser's visit to Tangier—Press agitation—The fall of Delcassé—The Act of Algeciras and its sequel—Fez and Agadir—The crisis of 1911—The Mansion House speech—Public opinion at fever-heat—Morel criticizes Foreign Office—"A satire upon civilization"—Embittered feeling in Germany—"Is there a way out?"—Morel's three suggestions—No secret commitments—The position of Germany—"The only sound policy"—An unheeded warning.

*Morocco in Diplomacy* was written in the hope of averting a European war.

In 1911, over the question of Morocco, the Great Powers had been brought to the edge of the abyss. They had caught a glimpse of its infernal depths, and, shivering, had drawn back for a little space.

But the peril remained. The forces which had driven the nations so far on the road to destruction were still active. Presently, if something were not done to counteract them, they would succeed and the war would ensue.

This, at any rate, was Morel's view, and for this reason he wrote his book. It was written, he said, three years later (December 1914),

"in the hopes of helping to avert a catastrophe such as has now overwhelmed us. It was a chapter of the mistaken policy which already in 1911 had made the present European war a threatening

possibility. It was a passionate and hopeless appeal to get that policy abandoned while it was still time.”<sup>1</sup>

And in another place he wrote :—

“ The investigation ” (of the Morocco question) “ conveyed the certainty, at any rate to the investigator, that after the words that had been uttered and the facts that had transpired, a European war in the near future, a war which would involve the British people, was virtually inevitable unless certain things occurred. The only possible way to save the situation, so it seemed to me, was by making the true facts known to the British public, in the hope that the publication of them might lead to a revulsion of feeling, and to a clearer comprehension of the German case, and thereby provoking a full and frank discussion in Parliament as to the real character of our official relations with France, and therefore, contingently with Russia, to whose Government official France was bound in a military and political alliance. To these ends . . . I published . . . *Morocco in Diplomacy* . . . and in writing it I believed that I was performing a useful and patriotic if somewhat painful task. My objects were not misjudged at the time, even by those who disagreed with the deductions I drew from the marshalling of facts, which to this day remain absolutely unchallenged.”<sup>2</sup>

And the book itself was dedicated

To Those  
Who Believe the Establishment of  
Friendlier Relations between  
France and Germany  
To be essential to the Prosperity and Welfare  
Of the British and German peoples and to the  
Maintenance of the World’s Peace

And to

Those who are persuaded that the acceptance of  
national liabilities towards Foreign Powers by  
Secret Commitments withheld from the British  
People, is both a menace to the security of the  
State and a betrayal of the National trust.

<sup>1</sup> Preface to the first edition of a reprint of *Morocco in Diplomacy*, published under the title of *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy : an Unheeded Warning* (Nat. Lab. Press, Ltd. 1915).

<sup>2</sup> Personal Foreword to *Truth and the War* (Nat. Lab. Press, Ltd. 1916).

### The Morocco Question.

It is, of course, impossible in the course of a short chapter to give anything like an adequate summary of the facts and conclusions put forward, in a highly detailed and elaborate form, in this important book. It is necessary, however, in order to make Morel's position intelligible to those who have not studied his writings, and who perhaps are not in agreement with his present political attitude, to say something about the Morocco question as viewed by him in *Morocco and Diplomacy*, giving the salient facts there presented as far as possible in his own words.

The story of this question begins in the year 1880, when an International Conference, in which Britain, France, Spain and Germany took part, was held at Madrid, and it was decided that all nations should in future enjoy equality of treatment in Morocco. Years went by, and then, in 1901, some tension, owing to frontier difficulties, having arisen between France and Morocco, the Sultan of Morocco sent a mission to Paris, and an agreement was drawn up between the two countries, based upon "respect for the integrity of the Shereefian Empire on the one hand and, on the other, an improvement in the situation affecting the close neighbourhood between them."<sup>3</sup>

In spite of this agreement, however, the French Foreign Minister (M. Delcassé), in the very same year secretly proposed to Spain that the two countries should divide Morocco between them, but the British Government, getting to hear of this, put pressure upon Spain, and the negotiations were broken off.<sup>4</sup>

### The Secret Clauses.

In 1904, the relations between Britain and France having improved and deepened into the *entente cordiale*, the two

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> These facts were not revealed until 1911, ten years later.

Powers made a joint public declaration on the subject of Morocco and Egypt, the first two articles of which contained the following sentences :—

“ His Britannic Majesty’s Government declare that they have no intention of altering the political status of Egypt.”

“ The Government of the French Republic declare that they have no intention of altering the political status of Morocco.”

But there was also a secret article which ran :—

“ In the event of either Government finding itself constrained by the force of circumstances to modify the policy in respect to Egypt and Morocco the engagements which they have undertaken (in other articles) remain intact.”

This was in April. In the following October another public declaration was made, this time by France and Spain. This was to the effect that both Powers

“ remain firmly attached to the integrity of the Moorish Empire under the sovereignty of the Sultan.”

But on the very same occasion the two Powers entered into a secret convention (of which the British Government was cognizant) arranging for the future partition of Morocco

“ in case the continuance of the political status of Morocco and the Shereefian Government should become impossible or if, owing to the weakness of that Government and to its continued inability to uphold law and order, *or to any other cause*, the existence of which is acknowledged by both parties, the *status quo* can no longer be maintained.”<sup>5</sup>

For some reason or other M. Delcassé neglected to give official notification to Germany of these two public declarations,<sup>6</sup> and he then “ suddenly pitched a veritable cargo

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 60.

<sup>6</sup> The secret clauses, of course, were not notified to any one. They were first published to the world, in *Le Temps* and *Le Matin*, in November 1911, seven years later!

of reforms at the head of the Sultan, and peremptorily demanded immediate compliance.”<sup>7</sup>

### The Crisis of 1905.

In the meantime Germany’s suspicions had been aroused, partly owing to indiscretions in the Paris Press hinting at the existence of the “secret articles,” and, on March 31, 1905, the Kaiser visited Tangier, and in a speech to the Sultan’s representatives made the following declaration:—

“I am determined to do all that is in my power to safeguard efficaciously the interests of Germany in Morocco. I look upon the Sultan as an absolutely independent sovereign.”<sup>8</sup>

“At the same time,”<sup>9</sup> says Morel, “the Sultan, doubtless at Germany’s suggestion, issued a Note to all the signatory Powers of the Madrid Convention, suggesting a further International Conference upon the affairs of his country and Europe’s connection therewith. This the German Government promptly accepted.”<sup>10</sup>

Now the British public knew nothing about the above-mentioned secret clauses. They therefore looked upon the Kaiser’s declaration as an attempt “to break up the Anglo-French *Entente*.<sup>11</sup> The newspapers—the *Times* in particular—worked up a violent agitation, “incited,” said Morel, “both in England and France, by the ‘diplomatic machine’ concerned in working for the execution the secret arrangements of 1914.”<sup>12</sup> “M. Delcassé was represented as the unhappy victim of German resentment for the leading part he had played in concluding the Anglo-French general settlement.”<sup>13</sup> “Germany’s right to a say in the Moroccan settlement is scornfully denied. The idea of a Conference

<sup>7</sup> *Truth and the War*, p. 77. <sup>8</sup> See *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> As a fact on May 30th.

<sup>10</sup> *Truth and the War*, p. 77.

<sup>11</sup> *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 77. <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p. 76. <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* p. 78.

is violently opposed.”<sup>14</sup> “Its object,” said a Paris dispatch in the *Times* (May 2nd), “could only be to revise or stultify the agreement recently concluded by France, and to give Germany a voice in matters with which she had nothing to do.”<sup>15</sup>

Eventually, on June 7, M. Delcassé, who had been resisting the idea of a Conference, was overruled by his colleagues in the French Cabinet, and resigned, his fall being erroneously attributed, in the British Press, to a German ultimatum—and “the Sultan’s suggestion for a Conference, advised by the Germans, was accepted, first by Italy, then by Austria, then by the other Powers in succession, and, finally, by France and Britain.”<sup>16</sup>

### The Act of Algeciras.

The Conference met at Algeciras in February 1906,<sup>17</sup> and eventually, after protracted discussions, an Act was drawn up “in the name of God Almighty,” based “upon the three-fold principle of the sovereignty and independence of His Majesty the Sultan, the integrity of his dominions, and economic liberty without any inequality,”<sup>18</sup> conferring “certain strictly limited police powers upon France and Spain”<sup>19</sup> and providing “for the international capitalization of certain European enterprises in Morocco.”<sup>20</sup> This Act of Algeciras was finally ratified on June 18, 1906. “The integrity of Morocco,” said Morel, “and the independence

<sup>14</sup> *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 78.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 79.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. 90.

<sup>17</sup> It was at this time, as revealed to the House of Commons on August 3, 1914, that Sir Edward Grey was approached by the French Ambassador in London and consented to the initiation of the famous secret “conversations” between France and England. But this fact, of course, was not known to Morel at the time he wrote *Morocco in Diplomacy*.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 27.

<sup>19</sup> *Truth and the War*, p. 79.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

of its Government had been solemnly proclaimed by the Powers.”<sup>21</sup>

The story of the succeeding five years, as related by Morel in *Morocco in Diplomacy*, is complicated by a vast mass of detail, most interesting indeed to those who wish to study the history of the Morocco crisis, but impossible to compress within a short compass. Morel’s view was that, during these years, “the French Imperialists treated the Algeciras Act like waste paper,” and that “they proceeded systematically to conquer and absorb Morocco by direct military action and piecemeal occupation,<sup>22</sup> by fomenting internal discord, and by financial combinations which strangled the revenues of the Moorish Government”<sup>23</sup> whilst “every step they took was applauded, and every criticism thereon in Germany was denounced, by the officially inspired British Press.”<sup>24</sup> And this view he supported with an amazing body of evidence, pieced together with great care from various sources and fully “documented,” as the French would say, by references in every case to the authorities from which his facts and quotations were taken. It is this habit of his of carefully verifying his quotations and painstakingly giving in every instance the sources of his information, that helps to make Morel so impressive a controversialist and his books of such value even to those who may not follow him in all his conclusions.

### Fez and Agadir.

In the meantime, as a result of the treatment recorded

<sup>21</sup> *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 33.

<sup>22</sup> In 1907 French troops occupied Údja, Casablanca, Rabat and other Moorish districts. (See *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, pp. 38-39.)

<sup>23</sup> By 1910 the Sultan owed £6,530,000 to an International Syndicate, secured upon the whole of the Moorish customs. The greater part of this loan was literally forced upon the Sultan, and the agreement was only accepted by him after an ultimatum from France. (See *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 40.)

<sup>24</sup> *Truth and the War*, p. 80.

above, the condition of affairs in Morocco was rapidly growing worse. "With resources mortgaged to international finance . . . ; rent by internal disturbances and civil war ; its territory violated ; its coffers empty ; its subjects ground with taxation ; compelled to perpetrate abuses in order to sustain itself and feed its troops ; intrigued against by the French on every hand ; harassed with incessant demands for apologies and reforms and compensations ; its prestige irrevocably impaired ; with French expeditionary columns foraging in every direction from their base in the Shawiya ; the Moorish Government fell to pieces, while the country itself sunk into bloody chaos."<sup>25</sup> In 1919 the blow fell. Fez, the capital, was reported to be besieged by the insurgents. The familiar cry, "Women and children are in danger" (as in Johannesburg in 1895), went up ! At all costs they must be saved. Thereupon a French army, 30,000 strong, marched upon the city (with the publicly expressed approval of Sir Edward Grey), met with little or no opposition *en route*, entered Fez, and there—despite promises to withdraw "after succouring the menaced Europeans"—remained. And then it was discovered, as afterwards related by the well-known French publicist, M. Francis de Pressensé, that there were no women or children in danger at all, and that "at no moment had the safety of Fez and its inhabitants been seriously menaced."<sup>26</sup> The whole story was a farce ! But a farce bringing tragedy in its train. For in Fez the French army remained and further French troops were poured into the country. Spain, too, "getting increasingly uneasy at the prolongation of the French military occupation"<sup>27</sup> sent strong military forces into Moorish territory, and on July 3rd, the German gunboat *Panther* cast anchor in the roadstead of Agadir.

<sup>25</sup> *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 104.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, pp. 107-8.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* p. 105.

### The Crisis of 1911.

In despatching the *Panther* to Agadir, the German Government informed the signatory Powers of the Act of Algeciras that the ship had been sent to protect "German interests in the territory in question." The announcement went on to say that "as soon as the state of affairs in Morocco has resumed its former quiet aspect the ship charged with this protective mission shall leave the port of Agadir." In France it "was regarded," said M. Marcel Sembat, "by a large portion of the Press as expressing, not any hostile feeling or desire, but a wish to talk matters over."<sup>28</sup> But in this country it provoked an immediate crisis. It was even widely stated and believed that it was an attempt on the part of Germany to seize a naval base on the Atlantic coast of Morocco, although in Morel's opinion there was not the slightest evidence to show that that country ever had any such intention. The *Times* was particularly hostile. Sir Edward Grey sent for the German Ambassador and told him that "a new situation had been created" and that the British Government "could not recognize any new arrangement that might be come to without it."<sup>29</sup> And Mr. Asquith, in the House of Commons, after expressing himself confident that "diplomatic discussion" would find a solution of the question, went on to say that "in the part we shall take in it we shall have due regard to the protection of those interests and to the fulfilment of our treaty obligations to France, which are well known to the House."<sup>30</sup>

A few days later negotiations on the subject were opened between France and Germany.

"The basis," said Morel, "was that Germany and France would negotiate direct without the intervention of third parties, as they had done in February, 1909, and as France

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 128.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* p. 128.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* p. 123.

had negotiated in 1904 direct with Britain and then with Spain : that Germany would recognize an unqualified French Protectorate over Morocco, subject to (a) binding guarantees as to the permanance of the open door for trade coupled with securities for open tenders in the construction of public works, (b) territorial compensation in the French Congo with reciprocal exchange of German West African territory.”<sup>31</sup>

### The Mansion House Speech.

Suddenly, on July 20, in the midst of the negotiations, the *Times* declared, in a violent leader, that the German demands for territorial “compensation” were outrageous. “German statesmen,” it said, “must know perfectly well that no French Government could for a moment entertain them. They must know equally well that no British Government could consent to suffer so great a change to be made in the distribution of power in Africa, even were a French Government to be found feeble enough to sanction it.”<sup>32</sup> It was also suggested in a dispatch from its Paris correspondent, that a Franco-German reconciliation might be in the air, and “that the political consequence of a settlement on this scale would be too far-reaching, and that, quite apart from the question of Anglo-French relations, it would mean the death-blow to the Russian Alliance.”<sup>33</sup> The next day Sir Edward Grey sent for the German Ambassador, said that he had been “made anxious by the news which appeared the day before as to the demands which the German Government had made on the French Government,” and hinted that it might be necessary to “take some steps to protect British interests.”<sup>34</sup> The interview was a somewhat heated one, the German Ambassador

<sup>31</sup> *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 131.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 142.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* p. 140.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* p. 142.

protesting that Sir Edward Grey "seemed to be applying two standards," one for France and another for Germany,<sup>35</sup> and that evening Mr. Lloyd George went down to the Mansion House and made the famous speech in which he said :—

"I believe it is essential in the highest interests, not merely of this country but of the world, that Britain should at all hazards maintain her place and her prestige amongst the Great Powers of the world. . . . I would make great sacrifices to preserve peace. . . . But if a situation were to be forced upon us in which peace could only be preserved by the surrender of the great and beneficent position Britain has won by centuries of heroism and achievement, by allowing Britain to be treated as if she were of no account in the Cabinet of Nations, then I say emphatically that peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure."<sup>36</sup>

This speech aroused the greatest excitement. It was interpreted on all sides as amounting to a threat of hostilities. The *Times* on the following day compared Germany to "Dick Turpin." A furious Press campaign followed. "Public opinion in all three countries," said Morel, "reached fever-heat, and for a few days war seemed imminent."<sup>37</sup> "In France it subsided as soon as it arose, French diplomacy having secured its end. But it raged in England for three months, German resentment and bitterness growing as it progressed—not against France, but against Britain, and concentrating upon the obvious torch which set light to the edifice, viz. the attitude of the British Foreign Office as crystallized in the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who, of course, was merely used by Sir Edward Grey as the latter's mouthpiece."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 143.

<sup>36</sup> This speech was made after consultation with the Prime Minister and Sir E. Grey, but not with the other members of the Cabinet. (See *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 143.)

<sup>37</sup> *Truth and the War*, p. 84.

<sup>38</sup> *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 146.

### Morel Criticizes Foreign Office.

In *Morocco in Diplomacy* Morel severely criticized the attitude of the British Foreign Office in this matter. He argued that Germany had made no "demands" in the sense used by the Foreign Secretary. What had happened, he said, was this: certain negotiations were taking place between Germany and France "whereby Germany had undertaken to recognize a French Protectorate over Morocco, subject to economic guarantees,"<sup>39</sup> and as a return for this she had *asked for*, not *demanded*,<sup>40</sup> certain territorial compensations in the French Congo. In exchange for this latter territory she had also expressed her willingness to cede Togoland and a part of the Cameroons to France.<sup>41</sup> In spite of this, said Morel, Sir Edward Grey, on July 21st, "adopted a course of action which in the ultimate resort very nearly brought about a rupture with Germany—which would have meant a European war."<sup>42</sup> The result of Mr. Lloyd George's speech was that

"an exceedingly stiff interview took place between Sir Edward Grey and the German Ambassador on the 24th . . . both countries stood on their 'dignity'—the word is Sir Edward Grey's, not mine. In view of the Lloyd George speech, which the German Government looked upon as a threat, that Government declared it could not authorize Sir Edward Grey to make public use of the pledge given on the 12th to the effect that Germany had no territorial designs on Morocco. German public opinion, the German Government argued, would look upon such a declaration at that moment as a retreat before a British menace. Sir Edward Grey, for his part, could not, in view of the very stiff tone adopted by the German Ambassador, condescend to give any public explanation as to Mr. Lloyd George's speech. Such an explanation would not have been compatible with the dignity of Great Britain."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 149.

<sup>40</sup> The phrase used was "Voici ce que nous demandons," which, said Morel, "does not mean 'this is what we demand,' but 'this is what we ask.'" (See *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 149.)

<sup>41</sup> See *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 149.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* p. 154.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 157-8.

"Both Governments . . . stood on their dignity," commented Morel, "and millions of men and women who knew nothing of the whole miserable business, the vast majority of whom could certainly not have pointed out Morocco on the map, were on the verge of being precipitated into all the horrors, all the miseries and privations and losses, of a great war as a result thereof. Could there be a more scathing satire upon 'civilization'? Could there be a greater travesty of human government? Do not all the proposals for preventing such a state of affairs, such as greater publicity on foreign questions, greater public control of the diplomats, the break-up of the caste system in diplomacy, and so forth, immature, and incomplete, and unthought-out as they may be, appear the very embodiment of common sense as compared with that state of affairs itself?"<sup>44</sup>

### Embittered Feeling in Germany.

Eventually, as every one knows, war, on this occasion, was averted. It was averted, in Morel's view, by the pacific elements in the French Government, the British Government and the German Government, headed respectively by M. Caillaux (then Premier), Lord Morley, and the Kaiser.<sup>45</sup> The negotiations between France and Germany continued, and reached a solution in November, when a convention was drawn up by which Germany recognized a French Protectorate over Morocco; France agreed to preserve the open door for trade and capital investments in that country; Germany received a considerable portion of the French Congo and France received a small portion of the German Cameroons.<sup>46</sup>

But although war was averted great mischief had been done.

"The whole of Germany," said Morel, "without distinction of party or class, was rocking and seething with indignation at what it regarded as an insulting and unwarrantable interference on the part of Great Britain in the negotiations with France, as an arrogant British embargo upon Germany acquiring territory in Equatorial

<sup>44</sup> See *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 157.

<sup>45</sup> See *Truth and the War*, p. 84.

<sup>46</sup> See *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, chapter xxiv.

Africa, as proof that Britain was determined to block and hamper Germany's expansion ; that, in short, Germany had been deliberately and wantonly provoked. Far from dying down, this feeling gathered intensity with the weeks, and there is not, unhappily, the slightest doubt that the German Foreign Secretary interpreted with absolute accuracy the popular sentiment held by the entire German nation when he said, ' If the English Government had intended to complicate and embroil the political situation and to bring about a violent explosion, they would certainly have chosen no better means than the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which took so little into account for us the dignity and position of a Great Power which was claimed by him for England.' "<sup>47</sup>

### **"Is there a Way Out?"**

This embittered feeling in Germany was intensified in November when the secret clauses of the Morocco Agreements of 1904 were published in the Paris Press <sup>48</sup> and by the statements made by Capt. Faber, M.P., and others to the effect that the British Government had been prepared to lend military and naval aid to France in the event of a Franco-German rupture.

" To-day," wrote Morel in 1912, " we are confronted with this situation.

" The German nation firmly believes, not only that it is threatened by Great Britain, but that Great Britain intends to take the first opportunity to force a war.

" The British nation knows itself to be absolutely innocent of any such desire or intention.

" Is there a way out of the *impasse* ? Only, it seems to me, if British public opinion will think out the problem for itself, face the issues squarely and resolutely, and decline any longer to tolerate being in the position of finding itself involved in war without any real knowledge of the why and the wherefore." <sup>49</sup>

Such is the story of the Morocco affair, as detailed by Morel in the first twenty-four chapters of *Morocco in Diplomacy* (now *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*), and

<sup>47</sup> *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 159.

<sup>48</sup> See p. 181.

<sup>49</sup> *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 159.

even those who are most opposed to his views and conclusions will not deny that he put forward a powerful case. In his final chapter, which was entitled "An Appeal from Prejudice to Reason," Morel made certain important suggestions which, if adopted, he believed (this was in 1912) might relieve the international situation, and enable the world to pass from the shadow of impending war into the sunlight of international amity and peace.

"There are three keys," he said, "with which to unlock the door to a permanent improvement in Anglo-German relations if the British people desire it, as I firmly believe they do. The first is the honest admission that in the one case where a quarrel has occurred over a specific issue—Morocco—we have not treated Germany fairly, and that Germany has a legitimate grievance against us on that score. This I have tried to show from an analysis of the facts, not because it was a pleasant thing to do, . . . but because to any one who believes an understanding with Germany" (Morel made it clear in a foot-note that it was an "understanding" that he advocated and not an "alliance") "to be a supreme British national concern, the national interest demanded that it should be attempted. If the thinking public after reading this book share that view, a public force will have been created to prevent the recurrence of a similar episode. . . . *There is no need to clothe ourselves in a white sheet for the world's sneers.* But we shall be no weaker; we shall be stronger if we allow ourselves that we have been misled, quietly make up our minds to take the fact into account in our future dealings with Germany, and imitate our French friends to the extent of insisting upon a final close to the era of secret treaty making. . . ."

### No Secret Commitments.

Morel then turned to our relations with France.

"The second key," he said, "is the indispensable duty that devolves upon the House of Commons to ascertain the real nature of our relations with France, and if, as the public are assured, there are no positive commitments,"<sup>50</sup> to insist that British Foreign

<sup>50</sup> This, of course, was written two years before the disclosure by Sir E. Grey on August 3, 1914, of the secret arrangement with France.

Policy shall not "be directed as though such positive commitments existed."

"Not to make a firm and unambiguous stand now," he declared, "would mean for the British people an unending vista of prospective and unknown liabilities, with which they would be absolutely insane to permit themselves to be saddled. If the House of Commons does not pronounce unmistakably on the matter, it will be betraying its trust to the nation. *A means must be found for curtailing the virtually unlimited discretion of the executive in Foreign Affairs.*"

The "disorganized condition" of the Foreign Office, he contended, its "personal rivalries," and its "extraordinarily faulty intelligence system" were bad enough without the British national interest being tied up with similar vagaries prevailing in France. Neither the British nor the French peoples should be fettered or "committed by their Governments to a definite course of action in advance." "Such commitments played into the hands" of "the enemies of peace" in Germany, in France and in Britain, that peace "which is . . . the paramount interest both of the creative elements and of the working masses in each country."<sup>51</sup>

"There is such a section in Germany, which, seeing, or affecting to see, in Great Britain the implacable foe of Germany's national and inevitable expansion in commerce, industry and power, urges war."

There were similar war parties in Britain and in France.

"The task of the peoples concerned is to find statesmen who will shake themselves free from these influences."

Or alternatively,

"statesmen . . . must shake themselves free of them by taking the people more and more into their confidence and appealing more and more to the national interest of the vast mass of the popula-

<sup>51</sup> Except, he said, "the manufacturers of war material."

tion to counteract these influences. In other words, *foreign policy must be democratized*, which does not mean in the least . . . that diplomatists should carry on their conversations in the public squares . . . any more than the shipowner informs the neighbourhood of his negotiations over a charter party."

Further, "those who would stand to suffer most in an Anglo-French-German war would—the chances are ninety-nine to one—not be ourselves, nor the Germans, but the French," the "peace-loving, laborious, thrifty masses of the French nation."

Therefore "Britain's true rôle, the one responding alike to her real interests and to the professions of her public men, is to use her influence, not to impede, but, should she be required to use it at all one way or the other, to facilitate a thorough reconciliation between France and Germany."

### The Position of Germany.

Morel's "third key" was more controversial. It was, he said, "to be sought in a serious effort at comprehension both of the difficulties and the necessities which confront German statesmen and the German people." "Germany's supreme need to-day" was "not military conquest, but trade . . . markets."

"A fair and open commercial field in every undeveloped area of the world's surface is a vital national necessity for Germany. The closing of potential markets to her trade in Africa, in Asia, in South America, Germany is bound to regard as a blow aimed straight to her heart. . . . Either she must find work at home to do for her rapidly increasing population, or she must be content to see that population emigrating *en masse* to foreign lands overseas. To find her people in work, she not only requires expanding markets in which to sell her goods, but she requires the raw material of the tropics and sub-tropics to sustain her industries and manufactures. . . . The guiding motive of German Foreign Policy to-day is to secure for the German people unfettered access to markets overseas, as large a share as possible in the development of those markets, and

a voice in the acquisition of oversea territories which may fall, through the course of events, into the international melting-pot. It is not land hunger, but trade hunger which inspires her. . . .”

Moreover, it must be remembered that although Germany itself was a Protectionist country, yet in her overseas possessions, unlike other nations, she pursued the same commercial policy as did Britain, namely, the policy of “the open door.” Therefore the national interest of Great Britain did not lie in the direction of “hampering her oversea expansion in the undeveloped tropical and sub-tropical regions of the world,” “assuming, of course, that our rulers mean what they say when they tell us that, save here and there, we have got enough exotic territory on our hands already.”

Considering the lessons of the present war, the revolutionary changes it has occasioned, the confident prophecies it has exploded, the beliefs it has shown to be illusory, it is a remarkable thing that the great bulk of Morel’s writings requires so little modification in the light of present-day events. On one point only in this book does Morel put forward an argument with which, in the present writer’s opinion, he would find very few of his countrymen in agreement, and that is the suggestion that, seeing that Germany had acquired a considerable Colonial Empire, it was unreasonable for the Foreign Office to oppose for ever her “acquisition of coaling stations on the high seas.” As long as the international situation remains a war situation—that is to say, as long as war remains a by no means remote possibility—the British Government must be held justified, from motives of self-preservation, in opposing the acquisition by a formidable naval rival of harbours and coaling stations which might be utilized as bases for submarine warfare and commerce-destruction. That this attitude may not appear particularly agreeable to the eyes of a Continental

Power is of course true, and it is quite possible that from time to time it may give rise to international friction. Nevertheless, it is one of the facts arising from our island existence which cannot be ignored. With the spread of the international idea, the establishment of a League of Nations and the inauguration of an era of disarmament the difficulty will automatically disappear. In this lies the great hope of the future. But whilst the possibility of war remains, and so long as the nations, armed to the teeth, glare at each other across tariff-fenced frontiers, this difficulty, and other difficulties, will always be present.

It must not be thought, however, from the foregoing, that Morel was ever for one moment oblivious of the peculiar position of Britain as an island-Empire. The possibilities of submarine warfare had not in 1912 been realized by any public man—and in view of these possibilities Morel would perhaps now modify the passage to which allusion has been made—but in *Morocco in Diplomacy* he took care to point out quite clearly and definitely that the effort which he suggested should be made to bring about a better understanding with Germany

“is surely not incompatible with a fixed and unvarying determination that, come what may, no decrease of the British fleet below the level of safety can for one moment be entertained.”<sup>52</sup>

### “The Only Sound Policy.”

An alliance with neither France nor Germany was Morel’s conclusion.

“Let us . . . keep our hands free, unfettered by alliances or understandings of a compromising character . . . and let us come back to the only sound ideal of policy for Great Britain at the opening of the twentieth century, i.e. to play our own part in the Concert of Europe when necessity arises ; to uphold, if necessary by our whole strength, international treaties when violated *to the detriment either of our honour or of our interests* . . . to use our moral influence,

<sup>52</sup> *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 178.

which is enormous, . . . in favour of a just policy towards weaker peoples and coloured races which in the ultimate resort is wise as well as right ; to draw nearer by some well-thought-out scheme of Imperial partnerships in matters of defence and foreign policy to our great self-governing dependencies. . . .

" Let us, . . . made wiser, perchance, by this Morocco affair, persist in demanding . . . *some measure of effective national control over our own foreign policy.* Let us hold out the hand of friendship to Germany, not ostentatiously, not by sacrificing in the remotest degree our self-respect, not by offering her absurd 'concessions,' but in a spirit of frank recognition that between our two nations there is neither sense, nor dignity, nor justice, in petty jealousy and unworthy recrimination. In a spirit of frank recognition that Germany's industrial progress does but demonstrate *the need for renewed activities of our own in a field of honourable economic rivalry.* . . . In a spirit of determination that we shall allow no influences on our side . . . to prevent a gradual but sure advance towards the re-establishment of those harmonious relations which are alone worthy of two great peoples . . . whose respective prosperity and progress are indispensable to each other's welfare, and whose reconciliation would remove the mists of apprehension and uncertainty which weigh like a nightmare upon the world." <sup>53</sup>

### An Unheeded Warning.

Many may disagree with the views expressed so eloquently by Morel in the above passage. Many undoubtedly will. But no fair-minded reader can detect in them the slightest suspicion of want of patriotism. *Morocco in Diplomacy* was a plea—at almost the last moment, as one now sees—for peace. In view of what has occurred since, it is possible that it came too late. But clearly it was an honest effort to avert a coming world-catastrophe, and as such it was regarded at the time. The *Times*, for example, although vigorously attacked in the book, said, in reviewing it :—

" Mr. Morel has never lacked courage in denouncing abuses, and the columns of the *Times* bear witness to the sympathy with which we have often supported his efforts. It is with all the more regret, therefore, while we highly approve the general object with which

<sup>53</sup> *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, pp. 283-4.

*this book is written*—namely, the promotion of better relations between this country and Germany—we find ourselves unable to accept his main contention . . . ”;

whilst the *Academy* wrote :—

“ Events are piling up in a way which . . . makes it desirable that this book should be well and widely read. We may not agree with all its author’s conclusions, but the mass of facts which he presents clearly and concisely will assist in forming the opinion that, after all, the Moroccan crisis was not ALL Germany’s fault.”

The *Spectator* made an interesting admission :—

“ We learn,” it said, “ that there are three ‘ keys ’ with which to unlock the door that separates us from Germany. . . . The second key is ‘ the indispensable duty that devolves upon the House of Commons to understand the real nature of our relations with France.’ *Here we are faced by the old difficulty. The disclosure which Mr. Morel asks for would be fatal to the object for which the understanding between the two Powers was entered into.*”

The *Daily News* was enthusiastic :—

“ This book should be in the hands of every member of Parliament, every journalist whose duty it is to instruct public opinion, and every citizen who desires to form an independent judgment upon a very critical passage in the life of the English State. It is written with the lucidity and force of one of the most skilful publicists in the country ; it is the fruit of extensive and thorough investigation ; and it presents a reading which is not the official and vulgar reading.”

On the whole, in spite of its strong criticisms of British Foreign Policy, the book was favourably reviewed. The French official Press was, of course, hostile, but that there were many in France who agreed with Morel is shown by the following extract from *La Revue du Mois* :—

“ It is necessary to state,” said this journal, “ that the spirit which inspires Mr. Morel’s book is neither anti-French nor pro-German—as has been said by some French newspapers—but simply pacifist, and, in the true sense of the term, internationalist. He is

not campaigning against the *entente cordiale*—of which he was one of the firmest partisans when to be so required some courage in the Fashoda days—but he protests against the transformation of this friendly understanding into a warlike alliance directed against Germany. He desires that the friendly feeling between France and England should duplicate itself by the establishment of a friendly feeling between England and Germany, and that English diplomacy, instead of working against an improvement in Franco-German relations, should, on the contrary, endeavour to assist a Franco-German reconciliation. That would, indeed, be serving the interests of the British, French and German peoples against unscrupulous minorities and, especially, against the armament rings. All apostles of peace and of international justice must thank Mr. Morel for what he has written.”

*Morocco in Diplomacy* had an interesting history. First published in 1912 by Smith, Elder & Co.,<sup>54</sup> it had only a limited circulation—the British public had not then awakened to the importance of studying Foreign Affairs—and consequently it made no appreciable effect on public opinion, although Morel had reason to believe that it exercised some considerable influence in official circles. But shortly after the outbreak of the war it was republished by the National Labour Press under the title of *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy: An Unheeded Warning*, and between March 1915 and July 1918 it ran into five large editions.

<sup>54</sup> “Another great effort in the cause of humanity,” was the comment of the late Mr. Reginald Smith, K.C., the publisher, in a letter written to Morel after perusing the MS.

## CHAPTER XVII

### LIBERAL CANDIDATE FOR BIRKENHEAD

Invitation to Birkenhead—Views on election expenses—No mere party man—The late Mr. W. G. C. Gladstone's message—"You can trust Morel"—Morel and Liberalism—His "adoption speech"—Democracy and foreign policy—Foreign policy and social reform—The outbreak of the war—Candidature resigned—Not at first accepted—The *Morning Post's* attack—Morel's letter to the Birkenhead Liberal Association—"I cannot play the hypocrite among you"—A candidate no longer.

IN October 1912 Morel was invited by the Birkenhead Liberal Association to become their candidate for Parliament at the next General Election.

The invitation was a pressing one, and Morel, although not at that time particularly eager to plunge into Parliamentary life, did not feel that he ought to refuse. He warned the local officials, however, that in view of his outspoken and continued opposition to the Foreign Policy of the Government his candidature would probably be looked upon with disfavour by the central organization. "Never mind," replied the local officials in effect, "official support or no official support, if you will agree to stand, we will recommend you to the Association." So Morel agreed, and official support came as well, for the Chief Whip (Mr. Illingworth) wrote, highly commending the choice of the Birkenhead Liberals, and saying that the seat ought certainly to be won, "with a candidate of Mr. Morel's reputation and platform ability."

It was not only with respect to Foreign Affairs that Morel took up a decided stand. His attitude was equally positive on the question of election expenses. Whatever financial arrangements were arrived at between the Party organization and the local Association, he could assent, he declared, to no restrictions upon his complete freedom of judgment. "I hold very strongly," he wrote to his Chairman, "the view that a member of Parliament can be of no real service to his constituency if he is fettered in any way—apart from his own self-respect." If Birkenhead Liberals were looking for a candidate of pliant and flexible views they made a sad mistake when they chose the man they did.

### No Mere Party Man.

The prospective candidature was announced on November 1st. The announcement, declared the *Birkenhead News*, "will, we are certain, give the utmost satisfaction to all Liberals in the constituency," whilst the *Chester Chronicle* gave utterance to the feeling in Hawarden, whence for so many years Morel had directed his campaign for Congo Reform.

"There has not been a resident in Hawarden," it said, "not excepting the great Mr. Gladstone himself, who is more highly esteemed than Mr. Morel. . . . The contest, when it comes off, will be watched with interest by his many friends and well-wishers in Hawarden."

Later on, when the prospective candidature had been "enthusiastically endorsed" by the Liberal Four Hundred, the Birkenhead Liberal Association issued a pamphlet containing a short record of Morel's career. To this record were attached a number of "opinions" of the candidate contributed by men and women of various political views. Mr. W. G. C. Gladstone, grandson of the

"G. O. M." (since killed in action), sent the brief message, "You can trust Morel." Mr. Runciman, then President of the Board of Agriculture, wrote: "In Mr. Morel you have a man of international reputation, one who by his own force of character and singleness of aim has done great things in more than one part of the world." "He is not a mere party man, but first and foremost a man of heart, mind, and courage all his own," was the verdict of Mr. George M. Trevelyan; whilst Nonconformity, in the person of Dr. Clifford, added: "His outlook is wide, his fidelity to principle invincible, and his courage and patience inexhaustible." So, even though, during the period of the war, Morel has been perhaps the most bitterly attacked man in Britain, it must be admitted that in his time he has also had his share of praise.

### Morel and "Liberalism."

"Morel," wrote Mr. Robert Donald, editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, in the above-mentioned pamphlet, "is an able exponent of progressive Liberalism." As up to this time he had taken practically no part in domestic politics, it will be useful at this point to consider what Morel's views on parties and politics were, and what "Liberalism" meant to him.

At a later date Morel, then in a position of seclusion,<sup>1</sup> had the opportunity of reading Lord Morley's *Recollections*, and he says that the definition there given of "the mighty word in its large, far-spreading Continental sense," as standing for "respect for the dignity and worth of the individual, for pursuit of social good against class interest or dynastic interest," and as being "in its fullest and profoundest sense" the "point-blank opposite of militarism," expresses just the light in which he regarded

<sup>1</sup> The book was sent to him whilst in prison in 1917 by the late Lord Courtney of Penwith. (See p. 265.)

the Liberalism with which, in 1912, he formally identified himself in British politics. We shall see how he applied these principles to the political contest which lay before him, and how he interpreted them when the crisis came which put them and him to the test.

In his "adoption speech" Morel gave the first place to what he termed the "vital problem of social inequalities."

"To my mind," he said, "of all the problems which confront our national life, and go right down to the root of our racial power and prosperity, the gravest . . . is the problem which presents itself through the terrible inequalities in well-being and opportunity which divide various classes of our population. It is not so much the problem of the positively destitute. . . . It is the problem rather of those millions of men and women who, without being absolutely destitute, are yet for ever on the verge of extreme poverty through no fault of their own. It is the problem of those other millions of men and women who cannot, despite all their efforts, attain to a measure of comfort and decent living to which they are honourably and humanly entitled in any society, which ventures to call itself Christian, and who are ever haunted by an anxiety from which they ought to be free. . . . It is, as I conceive it, the very essence and marrow of Liberalism that, while it should deal with other and important problems as they arise, it should consecrate itself calmly, deliberately and resolutely to remove this blot upon our national escutcheon, this handicap to our race, and that it should deal with it at the foundations from which these inequalities arise.

What, after all, is the social phenomenon of our age? Wealth, piling up more and more every year, more and more concentrated; luxury more and more pronounced; and, beside that wealth and luxury, a vast, increasing, unchartered desert of human discomfort and distress. A more equitable distribution—gradually brought about—of socially produced wealth should be, and must be, the ultimate, constant, perpetual aim of Liberalism, if it is to retain its virility, maintain its hold upon the masses, justify its existence, and safeguard the State from violent and perhaps fatal disturbance."

Dealing with Foreign Affairs, Morel referred to the alleged lack of interest in these subjects displayed by the

British Democracy. He had been told, he said, that a candidate who spoke to his prospective constituents on Foreign Policy would probably be deemed a bore. This he could not help. "You simply cannot afford," he declared, "to disinterest yourselves from Foreign Affairs." A democratizing process had been taking place in our public departments. The Foreign Office alone remained untouched by this fertilizing stream. Wealth and aristocratic connections were still regarded as indispensable to those who wished to enter the diplomatic career. It was a career "closed to men of brains, education and intelligence who did not possess these attributes." Parliamentary, and therefore national, control of Foreign Policy had sunk to vanishing point. Dealing with the international situation he referred to Anglo-German relations. One of the paramount interests of the British and German peoples was that the existing friction should be solved by an honourable understanding and reconciliation.

"If I should ever be entrusted with your confidence," he said, "I should leave no stone unturned to help, so far as one man can help, to bring about that change. In so doing I consider I should be serving your interests more than in any other direction."

These remarks were greeted with applause.

For two years Morel continued to visit Birkenhead periodically, gaining steadily in local esteem. The views outlined in his "adoption speech" were consistently maintained and expanded in a series of subsequent addresses, several of which were published in pamphlet form, whilst his speeches on Foreign Affairs and Colonial Problems secured much more than local publicity, being frequently reported almost verbatim in such papers as the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Liverpool Daily Post*. He sought constantly to instruct the electorate upon matters

of Foreign Policy and upon the vast responsibilities assumed by the nation towards the coloured races of the Empire, whilst, keeping company with Mr. Lloyd George, he laid especial stress upon the intimate connection between foreign policy and social reform.

" You cannot dissociate your social problems from the question of your growing armaments," said he on December 9, 1913, " or from the question of your foreign policy, of which your armaments are in large measure the expression. These problems are usually treated as though they were distinct from the social problem, whereas they are indissolubly intertwined with it, and react upon it all along the line."

And later on in the same speech he spoke of the horror and the folly of Europe, " after two thousand years of Christianity,"

" spending annually £400,000,000 and training five millions of the flower of her manhood, not to improve society, not to ensure a more equitable distribution of socially-earned wealth, not to fight poverty and preventable disease, but to kill men and to break the hearts of women."

Again and again, during this two years' campaign, did Morel point out that conscription must inevitably be the consequence of a foreign policy of unavowed commitments to Continental Powers, and he did not conceal from the electors that he believed such commitments to exist. He familiarized them also with the history of the secret Morocco Agreements, and with the bearing of the Anglo-Franco-German disputes regarding them, upon the international situation, and in the most weighty words at his command he warned his hearers of the exceeding gravity of the situation, a gravity which comparatively few people in this country had realized at that time. The views thus vigorously put forward by Morel rapidly spread in the constituency. They

were shared, he found, by those Liberals in Birkenhead with whom he was in closest personal touch. He held them with conviction, and when the time came he stood by them. And then the war came and blew his work and his supporters away.

### The Candidature Resigned.

On August 4, 1914, the night of the British ultimatum to Germany, Morel sat down and wrote a letter to the Chairman of the Birkenhead Liberal Association. In this letter he recalled the numerous warnings he had given as to the character of the Foreign Policy pursued by the Liberal Cabinet, went on to formulate a severe indictment of the secret diplomacy revealed to the House of Commons on the preceding night by Sir Edward Grey, and finished up by placing himself unreservedly in the hands of the Executive and authorizing them to publish his letter.

This course was not adopted. Morel was urged—almost implored—not to take any overt action. Hopes were entertained that in course of time he might modify his views and come into line with the general feeling. Morel gave no encouragement to these hopes. More, he made it plain that his views were unalterable and that he would certainly give expression to them whenever circumstances, in his judgment, dictated. The crisis came with the publication in the *Morning Post*—accompanied by a violent attack—of a circular letter signed by J. Ramsay Macdonald, Charles Trevelyan, Norman Angell and E. D. Morel, inviting the formation of the association which subsequently became known as the Union of Democratic Control. This led to a public exchange of correspondence between Morel and the Liberal Executive. The Executive wrote to Morel that it was “their painful duty” to let him know that his attitude

was at variance with Liberalism in Birkenhead, and that his prospect of being returned as member for the borough was seriously jeopardized. The letter closed as follows :—

“ The officers desire to express their deep appreciation of the great services you have rendered to the Liberal cause, and the affectionate esteem in which you are held by every one in Birkenhead with whom you have come into contact.”

Morel’s reply aroused considerable interest and a good deal of controversy. So great was the demand for it that it had to be reprinted in pamphlet form, and ten thousand copies were sold in a few days. It subsequently reappeared as the first chapter of *Truth and the War*.

“ I cannot play the hypocrite among you.” With these words Morel closed one of the concluding passages in the above-mentioned letter. It is one of the keynotes of his whole career. Whether his views are right or wrong, popular or unpopular, Morel never makes the slightest attempt to conceal them, and there can be no doubt that they are sincerely held. In the case of the Birkenhead candidature Morel received many proofs that the consistency of his attitude was recognized even by many who did not share his views. In conveying the resolution passed by the Executive accepting Morel’s resignation, the Chairman wrote :—

“ Without exception one and all the speakers expressed the grief they felt personally at the turn events had taken. Tribute after tribute was paid to your ability, sincerity and high moral standards.”

“ Your action has been from first to last thoroughly, straightforward,” wrote afterwards a prominent member of the Executive, “ and nothing has happened, or can happen, to diminish the regard and honour in which you are held.”

In Morel’s view the Liberal party managers in Birkenhead had no option but to act as they did. “ It was a square

issue," he wrote to a correspondent, "between the Government's Foreign Policy and the man who arraigned it. They could not retain me without endorsing my condemnation of the Government."

In a leading article on Morel's resignation the *Birkenhead News* said :—

"We, in common with all his friends, very sincerely regret the fact that circumstances should have deprived the party of the services of a man who is held in high honour wherever the English language is spoken. Mr. Morel is a great humanitarian. He is a humanitarian first, last and all the time. He is also a man of the most absolute integrity of character, and Birkenhead Liberals will always look back with pleasure upon his association with the town, now unhappily broken."

After all, taking everything into consideration, including the tempest of passion raised by the war, Morel had no reason to regret his first experience of British party politics.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE GATHERING STORM

The coming struggle—Efforts to avert it—The danger of secret commitments—Need for open diplomacy—The obscurity of British Foreign Policy—“What are our relations with France?”—Letters to the Press—Support for Morel in France—And in the Liberal Press—Speech at Caxton Hall—Mr. Asquith denies the existence of secret commitments—Morel satisfied—Discontinues his Press campaign—His work on the Colonial Office Committee.

In Chapter XVI this narrative was brought down to March 1912, the date of the appearance of *Morocco in Diplomacy*. As has been said, this book was a last desperate appeal to the democracies of Europe to avert the world-war which Morel saw was impending. The appeal was unheeded, and it failed. Most people now will be of the opinion that it never had the slightest chance of succeeding. Great elemental forces were in motion. The accumulated animosities, rivalries and ambitions of years had taken concrete forms, and, touched with a monstrous life of their own, were slowly and stealthily approaching each other in armed opposition. It was probably beyond the power of any mortal man to avert the almost inevitable collision. But Morel, not realizing the grim humour of the situation—no David in combat with Goliath can afford a sense of perspective—did his manful best. And as this book is a record of his work and opinions, it is necessary here to summarize the situation as he then saw it.

### The Policy of the Foreign Office.

As we have seen in the earlier part of this book, Morel, in the course of his Congo Reform campaign had acquired a profound distrust of the methods of secret diplomacy and of the principles which animated the whole Foreign Office system.

His study of the Morocco affair had confirmed him in this distrust and had aroused him to the imminent peril of the situation.

In some way or other the British Foreign Office, in Morel's opinion, had unduly subordinated the policy of this country to the interests of certain chauvinistic elements which were becoming increasingly dominant in French Government circles—and France, as all the world knew, was committed to Russia by the secret clauses of the Franco-Russian Alliance.

Now if Britain were committed to France, either by secret engagements or by less definite assurances,<sup>1</sup> then, France being allied to Russia, it followed that Britain would be liable to be dragged with France into any quarrel in which the Government of the Tsar might be involved, and such a situation would certainly render any real *rapprochement* between Britain and Germany exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, of accomplishment.

At the same time Governmental spokesmen were repeatedly declaring that no such entanglements as had been suggested existed at all, and that British relations with Germany were of the most cordial character; and these asseverations had the effect of hampering, on the one hand, those who were agitating for "universal military training" as a means of preparing for the struggle they thought inevitable, and, on the other hand, those who were seeking, through a free and full discussion of Foreign

<sup>1</sup> As we now know, the celebrated naval and military "conversations" between France and Britain were authorized by Sir E. Grey in 1906.

Policy, to discover the causes of the international unrest, as a preliminary to removing them altogether.

All the time the feeling was prevalent amongst students of Foreign Policy that our relations with Germany were not as cordial as the Government pretended, and that, despite the protestations of Ministers, something or other was going on with France, the precise nature of which it was difficult to discover. A storm was brewing. There was electricity in the air. The weather-wise felt the tingling in their nerves. But to the general public the atmosphere seemed clear. The sun was shining, and there was nothing to disturb them in their cricket, their football, and the general work and play of their world.

### The Necessity of Open Diplomacy.

But Morel was one of the weather-wise, and in his view the first essential—if peace were to be preserved—was that British Foreign Policy should be honest, above-board and free from ambiguity.

If this were secured, two courses would then be open to the nation :

Firstly, Britain might enter into an open defensive alliance with France, making it clear at the same time that she did not intend to be involved in any entanglements due to aggressive designs on the part of Russia.

Secondly, she might decide to remain unfettered, unhampered and free.

If the first course were adopted, it would provide a salutary check both to German and to Russian Imperialism. It would make it clear to the first that an unjust attack upon France would at once bring Britain to the latter's assistance, and to the second that we had no intention of being dragged into a war arising out of the intrigues and ambitions of Tsardom.

If the second course were adopted, then Britain, free

from all Continental entanglements, would be able to exercise her full influence in the cause of peace, and could be appealed to by both disputants as an impartial and unbiased authority.

In Morel's opinion, either of these courses—he himself strongly favoured the second of them—would ease the international situation and perhaps avert the conflict altogether. In any case the primary necessity was that Parliament and the public should insist upon clearing up the obscurities which veiled our relations with France on the one hand and with Germany on the other. To this task Morel now addressed himself, and in a series of communications to the Press he again and again called attention to the gravity of the position and to the nature of the remedy. The following extracts from some of his writings will serve to show the line he pursued :—

“Until our Foreign Department is, in some measure, democratized the nation will continue to be in the position of finding itself suddenly involved in war.”—*Letter to “Daily News,” April 9, 1912.*

“What are our relations with France? A singular confusion appears to prevail on the subject. . . . One authority talks of an ‘Alliance’ and is rebuked by another who speaks of an ‘understanding of an intimate character’; another speaks of an ‘arrangement’ and of ‘engagements.’ Where does the truth lie? . . . The nature of our relations with France is the pivot upon which our whole Foreign Policy turns. Are not the people of this country entitled to know the facts? Is Parliament doing its duty so long as any doubts as to the facts prevail?”—*Letter to “Daily News,” May 2, 1912.*<sup>2</sup>

“The Anglo-French Convention of 1904 and the diplomatic support we gave to France in 1905 and 1911 on the strength of it have served their purpose . . . with the proclamation of a French Protectorate” (over Morocco). “What ‘engagements’ remain on

<sup>2</sup> The occasion for this letter was the statement by Lord Midleton in the House of Lords that the Government, in 1911, had contemplated the dispatch of six divisions to the Continent.

our part towards France, and under what diplomatic instrument are they to be studied?"—*Letter to "Westminster Gazette," May 16, 1912.*<sup>3</sup>

In a letter to the *Times* on May 23rd, Morel pointed out that the case he was arguing was, "of course, unpopular," but that it had been

"advanced quite as strongly in France from a similar point of view; for example, in the writings of M. Hanotaux and M. Felicien Challaye and in the speeches of Baron d'Estournelles de Constant and M. Jaurès."

### What are our Secret Commitments?

In the meantime in the international sphere several significant incidents were occurring. Certain Unionist newspapers had started a campaign in favour of converting the *entente* into an alliance. A £10,000,000 Anglo-French loan for Russian naval construction, "superintended by Messrs. Vickers," had been contracted, whilst in September the French fleet was moved from Brest to Toulon, and it was stated in high French and Russian naval circles that this transfer was the result of a specific naval convention with Britain.

These events brought forth a further letter from Morel :—

"What is the nature of our relations with France?" he asked. "To what extent are we tied by the Poincaré combination? To what degree are we involved in supporting any particular policy in the Mediterranean or elsewhere. . . . The public need to be constantly reminded that the increasing secrecy in which our Foreign

<sup>3</sup> Written in reply to a leading article in the *Westminster Gazette* which had stated that "our engagements to France are known and we shall be true to them." In an editorial foot-note to Morel's letter the *Westminster Gazette* declared, "We can assure him (Morel) that we are not thinking of any secret treaties or unavowed obligations."

<sup>4</sup> M. Poincaré had just negotiated at St. Petersburg a naval understanding with Russia.

Policy of late years has been cloaked is not even justified by proved efficiency. . . . It brought us twelve months ago within measurable distance of actual war in consequence of secret commitments revealed to us . . . by foreign newspapers."—*Letter to "Daily News," September 1, 1912.*

It may be mentioned that the views thus expressed by Morel were strongly supported at that time by the Liberal Press, in particular by the *Daily News*, the *Star*, and the *Manchester Guardian*. In France the same questions were being asked in *L'Humanité* by M. Jaurés and, a few months previously, Morel contributed an article, on much the same lines, to the well-known Paris review *L'Action National*, which journal, in introducing Morel to its readers, said :—

"Mr. Morel is not only one of the most competent writers on international affairs among his countrymen, he is one of the oldest partisans of the *entente cordiale*, and dared to be pro-French at a period when there was some merit in being so.<sup>5</sup>

Towards the close of the year Morel, in company with Professor L. T. Hobhouse, Mr. Gordon Harvey, M.P., and Mr. Arthur Ponsonby, M.P., spoke at a meeting at the Caxton Hall,<sup>6</sup> arranged by the Foreign Policy Committee, Lord Courtney of Penwith presiding. A French Yellow Book on the Moroccan question had just appeared, and in his speech Morel exposed from this official publication the falsity of the celebrated *Times* telegram of July 1911<sup>7</sup> which had been the means of causing so much ill-feeling towards Germany in this country, and which, it was commonly supposed, had inspired Mr. Lloyd George's Mansion House declaration.<sup>7</sup>

Morel's speech on this occasion—the date was November

<sup>5</sup> For Morel's early attitude toward France see Chapters II and III.

<sup>6</sup> See page 187.

<sup>7</sup> See page 188.

27, 1912<sup>8</sup>—made, said the *Liverpool Daily Post*, “a great impression,” and it was warmly praised by the *Nation* and the *Manchester Guardian*. Upon Morel’s disclosure the latter journal commented as follows :—

“A conversation between the French and German representatives which caused no offence to either was distorted in the London Press into a peremptory demand on the part of Germany for a cession of territory which, if it had been made, would have greatly injured the position of France. On the theory—for which there was no solid foundation—that such a demand had been made, much of British policy at that time was built up. Not only were we more French than the French, but we altered the facts to suit our own conceptions of what French policy ought to be. That kind of thing will always happen so long as a policy of friendship is used to serve the purposes of hatred.”

With the opening of 1913 there was a great renewal of the agitation in favour of National Service in this country, and on February 21st the *Daily News* published a long letter from Morel entitled “The Conscriptionist Agitation : What lies behind it ?” In this letter Morel, after referring to the introduction of the “Three Years’ Military Service Law” in France, to the increase in Russia’s military effectives and to the corresponding increase in German military expenditure, said :—

“Once again I urge, as I have been doing in your columns for the past eighteen months, that the key to the whole position is the future of our relations with France. Are we or are we not pledged to give military assistance to France in the event of a Continental war ? Are we free from entanglements ?”

### The Government’s Denial.

As though in answer to these questions, there came

<sup>8</sup> It is interesting to note that five days previously (that is, on November 22nd), as we now know, Sir E. Grey had written the “unofficial” letter to the French Ambassador in which he stated that the naval and military consultations between Britain and France did not “restrict the freedom of either Government to decide at any future time whether or not to assist the other by armed force.”

on March 10th, Mr. Asquith's famous denial, in reply to Lord Hugh Cecil, that the country was under any obligations to send an expeditionary force out of the country, this denial being repeated in various forms both by the Prime Minister and by Sir Edward Grey on March 24, 1913, April 28, 1914, and June 11, 1914.<sup>9</sup>

So explicit and categorical were these denials that they even satisfied Morel. They certainly silenced him. It was impossible, he felt, to doubt the solemn word of a British Prime Minister. And this conviction was strengthened by a statement made by a Cabinet Minister (Mr. W. Runciman) at a meeting at Birkenhead held in support of Morel's candidature. Standing by Morel's side, Mr. Runciman repeated the Premier's assurances. "Let me say in the most categorical way," he observed, "we have no secret understanding with any Foreign Powers which would involve us in a European war."

<sup>9</sup> The following are the most important of these declarations:—

On March 10, 1913, in the course of a debate on the address, Lord Hugh Cecil said:—

"The Right Hon. Gentleman and his colleagues are generally believed . . . to have entered into an arrangement, or, to speak more accurately, to have given assurances, which in the contingency of a great European war would involve heavy military obligations on this country. . . .

MR. ASQUITH.—Will the noble lord define a little more distinctly what he means? . . .

LORD H. CECIL.—There is a very general belief that this country is under an obligation, not a treaty obligation, but an obligation arising owing to an assurance given by the Ministry in the course of diplomatic associations, to send a very large armed force out of this country to operate in Europe. . . .

MR. ASQUITH.—I ought to say that it is not true."

On March 24, 1913, in reply to Sir William Byles and Mr. Joseph King, Mr. Asquith said: "As has been repeatedly stated, this country is not under any obligation not public and known to Parliament which compels it to take part in any war. In other words, if war arises between European Powers there are no unpublished agreements which will restrict or hamper the freedom of the Government or of Parliament to decide whether or not Great Britain shall participate in a war."

That was enough : Morel was convinced. He no longer enfiladed the Press with questions concerning alleged secret understandings. Assurances had been given by the highest authorities that no such entanglements existed. Britain's hands were free. And with a sigh of relief Morel turned to his important labours on the West African Lands Committee at the Colonial Office, busied himself with a projected history of the Congo Reform Movement, and confined his incursions into public politics to an occasional speech to the electors of Birkenhead, in which he constantly referred to the necessity of Democratic Control of Foreign Policy as one of the keys to International Peace.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR

July 1914—Holiday at Dieppe—The assassination of Jaurès—Hasty return to England—Parliament—Sir E. Grey's speech—The secret out—*Manchester Guardian's* criticisms—The Westminster group—The Union of Democratic Control—Its policy—Popular hostility—Special anger against Morel.

JULY 1914 found Morel at Dieppe, where he was spending a brief holiday. In a private memorandum he has described his experiences during the few days preceding the outbreak of the war :—

" In the last days of July the West African Lands Committee, on which I was working at the Colonial Office, broke up for the holidays. We said good-bye—some of us for the last time as it turned out—and spoke of whither we were respectively bound. I mentioned that I was crossing to Dieppe for a few days with my daughter. The Secretary of the Committee, who was also private secretary to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, took me aside, and endeavoured earnestly to dissuade me. I asked him why. His answer was to the effect that the international situation was very serious—more serious than the public was aware. This was on Wednesday, July 26th. We crossed on the Thursday. The storm-clouds were gathering fast, but somehow it seemed impossible they could burst. On the Saturday morning I was swimming in the sea before breakfast and heard a Frenchman shout to his neighbour that Jaurès had been assassinated, ' Enfin, on lui a fait son affaire.' I hurried back to the hotel. The news was only too true. On Sunday morning the walls were covered with the General Mobilization Order, and there were many heartrending scenes in the narrow streets of the old town."

Of these scenes at Dieppe on that fatal Sunday (August 2nd) and the thoughts that arose in his mind as he witnessed them, he has written in another place<sup>1</sup> :—

(The) “irregular, ill-paved streets were full of men and women and children, mostly weeping ; though the younger children only wondered. At every door stood little groups of people with faces drawn and pitiful. Reservists uttering their last farewells, putting gently aside encircling arms, taking the last pledge from quivering lips. Above all, permeating all, a consciousness of some invisible, irresistible presence, inhuman, pitiless ; some monstrous, unseen hand stretched out, tearing son from mother, husband from wife, father from children. And one realized with an icy chill at one’s heart that the inevitable had really happened ; that because one of the great ones of the earth had fallen beneath the hand of the assassins in a far distant country, because the other great ones of the earth had quarrelled as the result of that crime, because the rulers of Christian Europe had for years been squandering the substance of their peoples in piling up weapons destructive of human life until all Europe was one vast arsenal, and had planned and schemed against one another through their appointed agents ; that because of such things, these humble folk in this small town in which I moved were stricken down, their lives rent and shattered.”

Morel saw that the long-threatened war had come at last. There in France the imminent peril of the crisis was more quickly realized than it was in Britain. With an entire absence of military frenzy, with dread foreboding but with high seriousness and grim resolution, France prepared for war. The memorandum continued :—

“ We decided to leave by the one o’clock boat, which was crammed. It was a horrible feeling waiting for the gangway to be lowered—the anxious crowd, the confusion, the sense of impending disaster ; and all the while one’s brain throbbed with the knowledge that the calamity so long feared, so long predicted, had fallen at last. The Paris train came in, packed to overflowing. Hundreds had to be left behind, for the boat was more than full before the train steamed in along the quay. We had an awful crossing. There was no room to move on deck, and the seas came over, drenching us.

<sup>1</sup> *Truth and the War*, pp. 44–45.

"At home I found letters from Trevelyan speaking of some contemplated effort on the part of Radical and Labour members for peace and asking my help. I called on him early on Monday. At a few minutes to three he and I and his brother walked through the empty House of Commons. I recalled Bright's phrase :—

"The angel of death has been abroad throughout the land ; you may almost hear the beating of his wings."

"One seemed to feel an unseen presence. The brooding silence was full of terrific portents. We waited in Trevelyan's room while the fate of millions was being decided above us. Every now and again a dull roar surged in from the crowds outside cheering some Minister or other on his way to the House. Later, Trevelyan came down and reported the character of Grey's speech. And again, when it was all over, 'It means war,' he said. We passed out as men in a dream. I read Grey's speech. So the truth was out at last. We had been bound all along to France, and therefore, necessarily to Russia, to the Tsar !<sup>2</sup> . . . No wonder Morley and Burns were resigning."

### The "Secret Obligations."

This was the speech in which Sir Edward Grey, for the first time, revealed the nature of the obligations to France—obligations of honour—which the Foreign Office had incurred, but the existence of which had previously been denied. Like many others, Morel felt that the country had been misled and betrayed. That he was by no means alone in this opinion is shown by this extract from the *Manchester Guardian* of the following day :—

"Sir Edward Grey's speech last night . . . was not fair, either to the House of Commons or to the country. It showed that for years he has been keeping back the whole truth. . . . This long course of disloyalty to popular rights . . . is not atoned for by the deathbed confession of last night. It is a mockery to throw on the House of Commons the responsibility of deciding at a moment's notice, and in circumstances of great excitement, on a policy that has been maturing for years. . . . A minority did protest, and nobly, against the incompetence and secretiveness of the conduct of our foreign affairs which now threatens to wreck the moral and material progress

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Lord Loreburn : "We went to war unprepared in a Russian quarrel because we were tied to France in the dark"—*How the War Came* (Methuen, 1919).

of half a century. . . . We are told by the conspirators that honour bids us go to war. Whose honour? Not that of the Government, for if what the war party says were true, then what Mr. Asquith and Sir E. Grey said was false. . . . Whose honour, then? The honour of those who have led France to hope that we would undertake responsibilities which all the time they were anxious to conceal from Englishmen? If any have been guilty of that double perfidy to England and to France, not all the blood of every English soldier and sailor, not all the tears of widows and orphans, would restore to them the honour which they have so shamelessly lost.”<sup>3</sup>

Thus the great Manchester journal, which undoubtedly voiced the views held at that time by many thousands of men and women both within and without the Liberal and Radical ranks.

### War Declared.

Morel's memorandum concluded as follows:—

“The next day came the news about Belgium—a foregone conclusion, of course. But what madness! So it would be a war for Belgium, and the Tsar and the *revanche* would be well hidden in the smoke from the Liège forts. And the people would be taken in, naturally. That evening I sent my views in writing to the Chairman of the Birkenhead Liberal Association, leaving myself in the Association's hands.”

The final words of this letter of Morel's to his political friends at Birkenhead are well worth quoting here:—

“These are the chief reasons,” he wrote, “which have led me to the convictions expressed in this letter. For years the people of this country have had it dinned into their ears by those to whom they have looked for guidance that the system of diplomatic ‘groupings,’ and Britain's co-operation with one of those groups, was the sure means of preserving peace. They now see the results. Soon these results will eat their way into every home. Their first effect is to shatter for a generation all the schemes of social betterment upon which the masses were at last beginning to build high hopes. May the realization of the fallacies for which the workers must now

<sup>3</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, August 4, 1914.

pay in blood and tears, may the sufferings they must presently endure, burn into their hearts and souls the passionate determination that, to live, democracy must rid itself of the machinery by which, in darkness and in secrecy, its destinies are made the sport of men whose actions it cannot control."

By this time the die was cast. Lord Morley, Mr. John Burns, and Mr. Charles Trevelyan had, on the previous day, left the Government,<sup>4</sup> and Britain entered upon the greatest war in all her long and warlike history.

### The Westminster Group.

During these critical days, and for some time afterwards, a small group of men, of whom Morel was one, had been meeting at the house of Mr. Charles Trevelyan, 5 Great College Street, Westminster.

"For years," said Morel, "they had shared a common conviction that Europe's statesmen were drifting to a catastrophe. . . . In their several ways they had endeavoured to rouse public opinion to the terrible gravity of the situation ; and they had failed. . . . Was anything left for this small group of men to do ? Should they attempt to involve some constructive programme : . . . to provide some rallying centre for future political action—national in its inception, international in its ultimate aims—around which men and women holding, it might be, diverse and even contradictory views as to the origins of the war, could, nevertheless, gather, restore their shattered faiths, and strive to lay the foundations of a more enduring edifice ? When discussion reached the point of decision, just five individuals felt that the effort must be made."<sup>5</sup>

These five individuals were Mr. Charles Trevelyan, M.P., late Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, eldest son of the Right Hon. Sir George Otto Trevelyan, Bart., and grand-nephew of Lord Macaulay ; Mr. J. Ramsay Macdonald, M.P., chairman, up to the outbreak

<sup>4</sup> It is said that several other members of the Government also tendered their resignations to the Prime Minister, but withdrew them when Germany violated the neutrality of Belgium.

<sup>5</sup> *Contemporary Review*, July 1915.

of the war, of the Labour Party in Parliament, Mr. Arthur Ponsonby, M.P., formerly private secretary to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and one of the leading advocates of Democratic Control of Foreign Affairs in Parliament ; Mr. Norman Angell, the author of the celebrated book *The Great Illusion* ; and E. D. Morel. Together these five men, to whom others were subsequently added, looking forward to the hour when the war should end—which very few, if any, at that time realized would be so long deferred—set to work to devise a policy which they considered, if adopted at the settlement, would lead to a permanent peace. The policy thus devised was subsequently adopted a few weeks later by a society of which Morel became the secretary and to which was given the name of the Union of Democratic Control.

The purpose of this book is not to relate the history of the Union of Democratic Control nor to give anything like a connected narrative of the work of what may be called the “Pacifist Movement” in Britain during the period of the war. But as Morel has been so closely identified, as its secretary and one of its founders, with the Union, it is necessary to say something here of the objects of that Society.

### **The Union of Democratic Control.**

Strange as it may seem to the ordinary reader, the Union of Democratic Control was never what is ordinarily called a Stop-the-War or Peace Society. It is true, as will presently be mentioned, that as the years went by the Union began to urge that an attempt should be made to shorten the period of destruction by reinforcing the military arm with the weapon of diplomacy, but in its inception, and in fact throughout its whole existence, the main object of the Society was to advocate that at the close of the war a settlement should be adopted which,

instead of sowing the seeds of future conflicts, should lead to a durable and a democratic peace.

The leaders of this movement looked back at the history of previous wars. They saw that nearly every war in the past had been followed, not by a democratic peace, but by an armed truce leading to future hostilities ; and in order to prevent such a thing occurring again they considered that a real scientific effort should be made, during the war itself, to familiarize the people with the principles which made for stability in international relationships, and which, if applied to the settlement at the close of the conflict, might lead to a lasting peace. Only if this were done, they thought, could the great World-War, which began in August 1914, actually be a war which would bring all wars to an end. The nature of the principles thus advocated by Morel and his colleagues can be gathered from the following official statement of policy issued towards the close of 1914 :—

#### WHAT THE UNION STANDS FOR.

The Union has been created to formulate and organize support for such a policy as shall lead to the establishment and maintenance of an enduring peace. For this purpose the Union advocates the following points and takes any other action which the Council of the Union may, from time to time, declare to be in furtherance of such policy :—

1. No province shall be transferred from one Government to another without the consent by plebiscite or otherwise of the population of such province.
2. No treaty, arrangement or undertaking shall be entered upon in the name of Great Britain without the sanction of Parliament. Adequate machinery for ensuring democratic control of foreign policy shall be created.
3. The foreign policy of Great Britain shall not be aimed at creating alliances for the purpose of maintaining the balance of power, but shall be dictated to concerted action between the Powers, and the setting up of an International Council, whose deliberations and discussions shall be public, with such machinery for securing international agreement as shall be the guarantee of an abiding peace.

4. Great Britain shall propose, as part of the peace settlement, a plan for the drastic reduction, by consent, of the armaments of all the belligerent Powers, and to facilitate that policy shall attempt to secure the general nationalization of the manufacture of armaments and the control of the export of armaments by one country to another.

A year later, when the first campaign was started by Mr. W. M. Hughes and others in favour of continuing the war, after the peace, by means of an economic boycott and tariff war—proposals, which in the opinion of the leaders of the Union, would, if carried out, lead inevitably to another military conflict, the following fifth point was added to the above programme :—

5. The European conflict shall not be continued by economic war after the military operations have ceased. British policy shall be directed towards promoting free commercial intercourse between all nations and the preservation and extension of the principle of the open door.

### **Reason in War-time.**

It is difficult to understand to-day why such a policy as the foregoing—which was practically the same in principle as that advocated in 1918 by President Wilson<sup>6</sup> and

<sup>6</sup> The following points which President Wilson declared should form a basis of a permanent peace will be found to be precisely the same in principle as those embodied in the five points, quoted above, of the Union of Democratic Control :—

1. “The peoples and provinces are not to be bartered about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were chattels and pawns in a game.”—February 11, 1918.

“The settlement of every question, whether of territory or of sovereignty, or economic arrangement, or of political relationship, upon the basis of the free acceptance of that settlement by the people immediately concerned.”—July 4, 1918.

2. “Open covenants of peace openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind, but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in public view.”—July 8, 1918.

3. “A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees

since accepted, in theory at any rate, by all the belligerent Governments, should have excited such hostility when first put forward in 1914, and why such violent attacks should have been levelled at Morel in particular, as being the secretary of the organization which advocated it. But those who take the trouble to turn up the files of the newspapers and magazines of 1914 and 1915 will be surprised—so short are human memories!—to find that any one who in those days ventured to advocate such principles as those which were afterwards associated for a time with the name of President Wilson was certain to incur the most furious and implacable hostility. It has always been so in war-time and probably always will be so as long as wars continue.

"It is no use to argue," said Cobden in 1862, "as to what is the origin of the war, and no use whatever to advise the disputants. From the moment the first shot is fired, or the first blow is struck in a dispute, then farewell to all reason and argument; you might as well reason with mad dogs as with men when they have begun to spill each other's blood in mortal combat. I was so convinced of the fact during the American War; I was so convinced of the utter uselessness of raising one's voice in opposition to war when it has once begun, that I made up my mind that so long as I was in political life, should a war again break out between England and a great Power, I would never open my mouth upon the subject from the time the first gun was fired until the peace was made."<sup>7</sup>

of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small States alike."—January 8, 1918.

"There can be no leagues or alliances or special covenants and understandings within the general and common family of the League of Nations."—September 27, 1918.

4. "Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety?"—January 8, 1918.

5. "The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers, and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations consenting to the peace and associating themselves for its maintenance."—July 8, 1918.

Morel and his friends can therefore claim the distinction of having enunciated in 1914 the very principles which (four years later) were proclaimed to the world by the President of the United States of America.

<sup>7</sup> Morley's *Life of Cobden*, chapter xxiv.

And those who, during such times of popular passion, take it upon themselves to advocate, for the sake of the future of humanity, reasonable terms of peace, will assuredly be accused of advocating such terms, not for the sake of the future of all, but solely for the purpose of befriending the enemy. One example of this will suffice. It is a commonplace of modern enlightened statesmanship that to follow up a victorious war by annexing a part of the territory of the enemy-state against the wishes of those who inhabit that territory will almost certainly lead to another war in the future, and it is generally accepted that the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine by Prussia in 1871, in this manner, was one of the principal causes of European unrest between 1871 and 1914.

Realizing the truth of this, Morel and his colleagues laid great stress—in supporting the first principle of their Union's programme—upon this point. They urged that the Allies should not seek at the close of the war to “divide up” the territories of the Central Powers amongst themselves. To pursue such a policy, they contended, would merely result in the creation of new “Alsace-Lorraines” to breed fresh wars. To the majority of people nowadays such a contention will appear to be the clearest common sense. But it was not so in 1914. In those feverish days the wildest schemes were advocated and applauded. According to one plan, Hanover, with the ports of Hamburg and Bremen, was to be annexed by Britain ; the whole of the Baltic seaboard of Prussia was to be given to the Tsar ; France was to have the whole of Germany up to the Rhine ; and Germany itself was to be disintegrated and destroyed. “Germany must cease to exist . . .” said the *New Statesman* on May 15, 1915. “It is the State that must be destroyed. . . . Not only can we not grant such a State an honourable peace, we cannot

grant it peace at all." And when Morel and his friends pointed out that such a policy, if carried out, would lead inevitably to further wars they were told that they were obviously working in the interests of the enemy and that their only motive was to save Germany from the consequences of her crimes.

Indeed, those who agree with Lord Morley that it is possible for the public in war-time to work itself into a mood in which "the most solid reasoning, the most careful tenderness of prejudice, the most unanswerable expostulations" are "all alike unavailing," may fairly hold that a certain amount of Morel's unpopularity during that period was due to the very reasonableness of the policy advocated by the Society of which he was the secretary. But this alone does not account for the peculiar ferocity of the attacks which were made upon him personally, and which were far more intense than anything which his colleagues had to endure. The reasons for this concentration of hate upon the person of Morel demand a chapter to themselves.

## CHAPTER XX

### AN ENQUIRY INTO "ORIGINS"

The origin of the war—Typical British view: Germany solely responsible—Morel disagrees—A “distributed” responsibility—Cause of Morel's unpopularity—A question of “background”—Morel's attitude misrepresented—Pro-German—Morel's motives—A permanent peace—Cutting at the roots—Destroy secret diplomacy and militarism—Truth and tactics—Controversial methods—Convincing proof of integrity.

THE principal cause of Morel's extreme unpopularity during the period of the war lay in the special attitude adopted by him towards the “origins” of this world-catastrophe.

This statement requires some elaboration.

Soon after the war began the typical British attitude towards its origin might be summarized in the following words :—

“The German Government (some people said ‘the whole of Germany’) prepared for this war for forty years. Having carefully laid their plans, they deliberately chose the moment most convenient to themselves to launch their armies upon their unoffending and only half-prepared neighbours. From the very first the war was deliberately premeditated, planned and provoked by the rulers of Germany (or ‘by Germany herself’) as a part of a great scheme of world-domination. . . . Upon them (or ‘upon the whole of the German people’) rested the sole responsibility of this colossal crime.”

Morel did not agree with this somewhat crude presentation of the case. For years, as we have seen, he had

been studying the nature of the forces which were making, in his opinion, for a European conflict, and he had come to certain conclusions upon the matter which he had expressed in various speeches and writings. Without setting forth these conclusions in detail we may say that Morel's main contention was that although the German Government, and especially the German military party, was largely responsible for the outbreak, yet it was not *solely* responsible. "The sole responsibility for the war," he said in a Personal Foreword to his much-discussed book *Truth and the War*, "cannot, in justice, be wholly imputed to" Germany. In a word, he considered that the responsibility for the war was a "distributed" responsibility, and that the awful conflict which was convulsing Europe was the outcome of a long series of diplomatic intrigues, contending imperialistic ambitions, economic rivalries, militaristic activities, and even personal jealousies, in which many Governments (especially that of Russia) had played a part, and for participation in which no one country—except Belgium—was entirely free from blame.

"I have neither consciously suppressed," he said,<sup>1</sup> "nor consciously minimized any acts contributed by Germany before the war to the general unrest. I have endeavoured to establish a sense of perspective between the acts of the German Government and the acts of other Governments. I have condemned German diplomacy and German Jingoes of the pen and of the sword; I have condemned the invasion of Belgium. But I have also condemned the diplomacy and the Jingism of other Governments, and I have refused to admit that the invasion of Belgium, wrong as it was—is without historical parallel and places Germany outside the pale of civilized States."

### A Question of Background.

The fact that Morel held these views does not entirely account for his extreme unpopularity, for similar views

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *Truth and the War* (National Labour Press), 1916.

were held by many eminent persons, President Wilson amongst them.<sup>2</sup> They were certainly unpopular views, for in war-time the instinct of every nation and the policy of every Government is to put the whole blame for the conflict upon the enemy. But he might have held them without incurring the enmity he did. The trouble was that he not only held them but expressed them, expressed them with vigour, and expressed them, perhaps, in a way which gave his opponents a better opportunity of misrepresenting his whole position than they otherwise might have had. For example, he so incessantly pressed these unpopular views upon the unwilling attention of the public, and, in speech after speech, and article after article, so developed this view and so emphasized this argument, that sometimes, in the crowded and detailed pictures he painted of general diplomatic weakness and wickedness, the special iniquities of which the German Government had been guilty may not have stood out in sufficiently startling relief. For a black silhouette a white background is needed to bring out the sharpness of the outline. The official Press pictured Germany as a black figure upon a background of almost immaculate purity. Morel did not accept this view of the European background : he pictured the German Government as black indeed, but upon a background, not of white but of grey, a grey which in some cases, notably in that of Russia, shaded into a blackness scarcely less deep than that of Germany herself ; and by his insistence upon the greyness of this background Morel, as has been said, gave to his opponents opportunity after opportunity of misrepresenting his general attitude. Of these oppor-

<sup>2</sup> " 'Have you heard what started the present war ? It was mutual suspicion, an interlacing of alliances, a complete web of intrigue and spying,' said President Wilson at Cincinnati" (*Daily News*, December 28, 1916).

tunities they availed themselves to the full, and, by a recourse, in numerous instances, to methods the nature of which it is difficult to characterize in polite language, they were able to present him to the general public—which naturally did not read his writings for themselves—not only as an apologist for Germany, but actually as a “pro-German.” And when once great masses of people get the legend firmly fixed in their minds that a certain person is “pro-enemy,” that particular individual’s opportunities for persuading them to listen to anything he has to say at all are, to say the least, very greatly restricted. This, of course, is just what his opponents desire.

### Morel’s Motives.

Now, why did Morel take this particular line, a line which aroused so much prejudice against him, even amongst some of those who agreed with the constructive policy of the Union of Democratic Control? It was a line which he took deliberately, and, amongst other reasons, for the following purpose:—

Rightly or wrongly, Morel believed that if the theory that Germany was solely responsible for the war once secured a firm hold upon the public mind, then it would be impossible to hope for such a settlement at the end of the war as would lead to a lasting peace. He felt that this theory, strongly and sincerely held, would breed such a hatred of Germany in this country as would drive all ideas of reason and justice out of the heads of those who were convinced by it, and that the people would then insist—and he could understand them doing so—upon imposing such harsh and shattering terms upon the enemy—terms even involving the dismemberment and enslavement of the Central Powers—as would lead inevitably to another war.

"The more deeply rooted becomes the belief," he said, "that Germany is the sole responsible author of the war . . . the more will public opinion gravitate towards the 'unconditional surrender' policy; and that policy means an indefinite prolongation of the war and, consequently, an immense additional loss of life . . . (and) is a policy which means a bad settlement, a settlement which would settle nothing, . . . which would pave the way for fresh convulsions, and which, both in its external and internal implications, would, in the ultimate resort, bring disaster upon the British Commonwealth."<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, Morel felt that if the people could only be brought to realize that the responsibility for the war was a "distributed" one, they would more readily develop a willingness to agree to such a settlement, based upon the principles of Democracy and International Co-operation, as would bind up the bleeding wounds of Europe and lead to an abiding peace.

### Cutting at the Roots.

Further, he felt that it would only be when the people thus realized the widely spreading and deeply rooted character of the causes of European unrest that they would direct the whole current of their energies to removing the evils of secret diplomacy and militarism which, if allowed to survive in any country after the war, would certainly, sooner or later, bring about another conflict.

<sup>3</sup> *Truth and the War*, p. 53. First printed in the *Labour Leader*, March 25, 1915. It is characteristic of Morel that he gave this practical reason for arguing against the theory of the "sole" responsibility of Germany as his second reason. His first was simply that "it is not true." To Morel the pursuit of Truth, regardless of consequences, is always the first essential, forgetful of the fact that Truth, as Rudyard Kipling mentions somewhere, is a naked lady, and that it is not always desirable, especially in war-time, that she should be revealed to the public in all her nudity. A man with such ideas as these is certain to prove a nuisance to orthodox politicians and to Governments.

" If it can be demonstrated," he said,<sup>4</sup> " that this charge against Germany " (i.e. that the German Government deliberately brought about the war for the purpose of world-domination) " is untrue . . . this war is seen to be the outcome, not of the inherent wickedness of one particular ruler, or group, or nation, but of a system of state-craft common to all Governments, a system of official intercourse between Governments in which all the peoples have helplessly acquiesced and for which all Governments are directly, and all peoples indirectly, responsible. And it is only when, and if, all Governments and all peoples have realized that the truth lies *here* that these systems can be overthrown and the conception of a real union between the nations can evolve. So long as one particular nation is credited with special and peculiar vices by another, so long will the others remain blind to the part played by their own rulers in producing the situation out of which the war arose, *and so long will every practical effort at the re-establishment of public law in Europe be doomed to death in birth.* We must build a new structure and we must use new material. *We cannot build a new structure in Europe without Germany.* If, therefore, we do not build upon a foundation of truth, the Europe which emerges from the war will even be more unstable than the Europe produced by the Treaty of Vienna a century ago."

These briefly were the reasons which impelled Morel to take the course—this decidedly unpopular course—he did, and to devote so much of his attention and argumentative skill to the question of "origins."

### Truth and Tactics.

It is possible that many of Morel's friends may have felt that in pursuing this particular path he was scarcely taking the wisest course. They may have felt with Cobden that whilst a nation is at war "it is no use to argue as to what is the origin of the war." They may have felt, too, that the principles which made for a permanent peace, and which were laid down in the programme of the Union of Democratic Control, were so essentially and obviously just and reasonable in themselves that

<sup>4</sup> *Truth and the War*, pp. 120-7. First published in *Labour Leader*, May 13, 1915.

they could be argued upon their own merits without insistent and reiterated references to specific "origins," and would be certain, when the moment came, to rally behind them sufficient public support to secure their adoption by the Governments concerned.

And as the war began to lengthen into years and the memories of the critical days of 1914 and of the negotiations preceding the conflict grew faint in people's minds, some of them may have felt still more strongly that the question whether Germany was more responsible than Russia, or whether Germany was alone responsible, or whether all the nations were responsible in varying degrees, did not matter one breath of wind in comparison with the great issue of the character of the Peace Settlement, and that Morel would stand a better chance of influencing public opinion in the desired direction by concentrating more especially upon the future and leaving the past to be taken care of by the historian.

But Morel did not see the matter in this light. As has been pointed out previously,<sup>5</sup> his mind is essentially a challenging one, and in public controversy he is not apt to be over-careful of the prejudices of others. He is inclined to be impatient of what he would probably call "round-about methods." In the high pursuit of truth he probably feels that he does not wish to be troubled with questions of minor tactics—they savour too much of the diplomacy which he loathes and which he knows has been responsible for so much public evil and so much private deadening of the mind. His natural instinct is to go straight for his object—no matter what obstacles lie across the direct path—and when he meets with those who prefer on occasion to go a round-about way, carefully skirting some thicket of prejudice in front of them in order to get to the same goal by a devious route, he

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter XI.

may not be above admiring their agility but he finds it very difficult to follow their example. And to those who say to him,

“ What you say is true, but now is not the fitting time to say it ” his instinct is to reply :—

“ If the thing is true, now *is* the fitting time to say it. Truth is always timely. I will not wait for a time which, after all, may never arrive, to proclaim the truth that I see. I will do it now.”<sup>6</sup>

### A Conclusive Proof of Integrity.

This, of course, is all very well. Some, however—not without knowledge of the characteristics of the British temperament—may feel inclined to shake their heads at such a declaration. They know that in the altogether abnormal atmosphere which exists in war-time, when public feelings are stirred to their depths and public passions are running mountains high, when nerves are racked and tense to breaking-point, when souls are torn and rendered desolate, when minds are reeling between anxiety for loved ones and a frenzied hate, born of fear, of the enemy, when ‘the voice of reason is all but silent, when knowledge is censored and the wildest legends pass as the current coin of belief, when for the vast majority but to consider for a moment is to be “full of sorrow and leaden-ey’d despairs,”’ and men and women turn away from thought lest they should lose their reason, criticism of what is believed to be the national cause cannot in its methods be too conciliatory, and a diplomatic care not to irritate prejudices can hardly be carried to

<sup>6</sup> It might be argued in reply, and with some justice, that in war-time a certain economy in truth is as necessary as economy in other matters. Truth, like many essential articles, may have to be restricted when the State is at war. Those who do not like these restrictions must first do away with war itself.

too extreme a length. And many of Morel's warmest friends and admirers felt that in adopting the particular methods he did he was raising against himself an unyielding wall of prejudice and passion and incurring a storm of unpopularity the extreme violence of which he might perhaps have mitigated had he taken a more discreet and diplomatic course.

This criticism of some of Morel's methods during the war is one which can be honestly made, and he himself, although perhaps not agreeing with it, would be the first to admit that reasonable grounds exist for such a judgment. But at least this can be said, that the very methods adopted by Morel throughout the war prove more convincingly than any protestations as to his motives which he himself might have made the absolute honesty, fearless sincerity and rigid integrity of the man. If he has a fault as a controversialist it is in the very rigour of this integrity.

Morel is certainly rigid, in his views as in his controversial methods. He is not a pliable man. He is a man of stubborn and rooted convictions, and once he has persuaded himself of the rightness of certain views it is almost impossible to induce him to modify them. And for this reason, because his convictions mean so much to him, and because he holds them so strongly, he is apt to take too little account of the weaknesses of others and to be impatient and even intolerant of opposition. Ignorance he can neither suffer nor understand. His own views have been formed as the result of deep reading and patient research, and he is able to bring such an array of facts to support his contentions that it is not unnatural that he should consider them to be unassailable. He is peculiarly blind to the fact that other people may not be so well informed as he is himself. This leads him on occasion to attribute wrong motives to opponents who are merely misinformed. And perhaps

he is sometimes apt to forget, in his ardent search for reality, that truth has many facets and that Pilate's question has never yet been answered. As has been indicated, these characteristics are reflected in his controversial style. It is a rhetorical style, extremely forcible, betraying evidence of wide information—with every statement well documented—and sometimes rising to heights of noble passion, but it would be absurd to say that it is characterized by undue suavity. His smashing argumentative hammer-blows often seem rather to stun than to persuade.<sup>7</sup> These are undoubted faults. They have possibly hampered Morel in his work and lost him the support of many who, with a little persuasion, might have been of help to him. All this can be admitted. But it is certain beyond all question that "no tool of the Kaiser," no advocate "in German pay" (such were some of the ridiculous charges made against him), would ever have taken the line he did. A genuine agent of Germany would have concealed his intentions in violent protestations of patriotism, and have endeavoured, under that cover, to carry out in secret such work as would be helpful to German Governmental policy.<sup>8</sup> Not so Morel. "You think you are living in a palace of truth," he proclaimed to a public convinced of the absolute righteousness of the case presented to them by the politicians and the Press. "You are not; you and the people of Germany also, and the peoples of all the countries concerned, are imprisoned in a dungeon of lies, and the truth is kept from you all. It shall be my task to show you the truth as I have been able to discover it, however

<sup>7</sup> This does not apply, curiously enough, to his writings on Africa either before or since 1914. When he touches upon Africa, and particularly when he is dealing with questions of native rights and on trade in the tropics, his style becomes singularly persuasive and convincing.

<sup>8</sup> The Bolo Case was an example of this.

unpalatable and however surprising it may be." This he did his best to do, and in the end paid the penalty which is exacted from all who appear to claim—however modest they actually may be—that they are wiser than their fellows.

### **Unfair Attacks.**

But when all is said and done, when every doubt as to the wisdom of some of Morel's controversial methods has been expressed, when the last "candid friend" has fired off his last unpleasant criticism, the fact still remains that the torrent of calumny and abuse with which Morel was deluged by the Press during four and a half years passed far beyond the bounds even of that most elastic excuse "there's a war on," and submerged him for a time in a frothing and bitter sea of unpopularity which neither his methods nor his spoken or written opinions in the very least deserved. Almost from the beginning of the war people's minds were poisoned against him by articles in widely circulated journals in which the usual methods of misrepresentation—garbled extracts from his writings, extracts given without their context and what appeared to be deliberate misrenderings of his opinions—were of course employed. Charges made against him in one journal would be repeated in half a hundred others, the charges growing (after the fashion of legends) with each repetition, and whilst the journal in which the charge first appeared might perhaps consent to insert Morel's reply or denial (and this was by no means the usual practice), such reply or denial would not be reprinted by the other forty-nine. The result was that whilst Morel might refute some allegation in one place, it was certain to spring up in another, and by the time he had followed it there, behold! it had passed into current history and had become an article of popular belief.

One or two instances will be sufficient to show the sort of thing that happened.

One fine day a certain leading London newspaper which, on the whole, is fairly and honestly conducted, propounded the theory that Germany had desired to promote ill-will between Britain and Belgium, and therefore that Morel had been the *dupe* of the German Government in the matter of the Congo. This was taken up by other journals. From a *dupe* Morel became a *conscious tool* of Germany ; then the person who had painted an exaggerated picture of Congo misrule, and finally doubts were expressed as to whether the “Congo atrocities” had ever taken place at all. Most of them, if not all, were probably invented by Morel !

Another allegation related to Morel’s book on Morocco. The circumstances in which this book was written will be remembered.<sup>9</sup> The menace of coming war overshadowed the Continent. The Morocco embroil had shown the world the danger. Morel wrote his book in a desperate attempt to avert the conflict. Although severe on Anglo-French diplomacy, the book was judged fairly at the time, even by those who disagreed with its conclusions. Several years later, when war had actually broken out, some one invented the phrase that Morel tried “to secure Morocco for Germany,” and this was believed by thousands.

### The Anglo-German Friendship Society.

A third accusation—and one frequently repeated—was that Morel had founded the Anglo-German (afterwards the British-German) Friendship Society. The facts relating to this accusation and its origin are worth chronicling as a sample of the kind of attack to which Morel was subjected.

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter XVI.

On July 30, 1915, Sir George Makgill, secretary of the Anti-German Union, writing in the *Morning Post*, said :—

"I am informed that while Councillor Kuhlmann was at the German Embassy in London one of his associates named Schubert used to go about enlisting members and collecting subscriptions for Mr. Morel's Anglo-German Friendship Society.

"From this it would appear that Mr. Morel was working with the sanction and approval of the German Embassy. We know now that Germany was then feverishly preparing for war, and we are justified in concluding that Mr. Morel's labours were, wittingly or not, part of that preparation."<sup>10</sup>

Such was the allegation. Now for the facts.

The chief promoters of the Anglo-German Friendship Society were Sir Frank Lascelles, for many years British ambassador at Berlin, chairman ; Lord Avebury, president ; and the Duke of Argyll, vice-president. Its vice-presidents included the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Archbishop of York, the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, the Lord Mayor of London, all the Lord Mayors of England, the Lord Provosts of Aberdeen, Glasgow, and Dundee, the Moderator of the Scottish Churches, the President of the Free Church Council, Lord Brassey and Lord Lonsdale. Its General Council and Executive Committee included a host of peers and baronets, members of Parliament, Church dignitaries, business men, officers of both services, civic authorities of the most important cities in the United Kingdom, and a number of head masters of public schools. Amongst the two hundred distinguished names figuring on its General Council and Executive Committee it is interesting to note those of—

Field-Marshal Lord (then Gen. Sir Douglas) Haig.	Gen. Sir H. Smith-Dorien.
Field-Marshal Lord Grenfell.	Gen. Sir R. Pole-Carew.
Field-Marshal Lord Methuen.	Admiral Lord Beresford.
	Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge.

<sup>10</sup> To this Morel replied, but the *Morning Post* refused to insert his letter.

Admiral Sir Charles Holtham.	The Duke of Sutherland.
Admiral Sir James Bruce.	Lord Stratheona.
Sir Edward Carson.	Lord Loreburn.
Sir Rufus Isaacs (now Lord Reading).	The Marquis of Downshire.
The Hon. Sir Eric Barrington.	The Earl of Aberdeen.
The Duke of Abercorn.	The Earl of Dunraven.
The Duke of Devonshire.	Lord Weardale.
	Lord Justice Kennedy.

and many others.

This was the Society, described by Sir George Makgill as "Mr. Morel's," collecting subscriptions through Baron Kuhlmann (of whom Mr. Morel was apparently the tool) and assisting Germany in her "feverish preparations for war"! The extent of Morel's connection with it is thus described by Sir Frank Lascelles:—

"14, CHESTER SQUARE, S.W.

"March 8, 1916.

"DEAR MR. MOREL,

"In reply to your letter forwarded to me by Mr. Trevelyan, I have no hesitation in saying that the British-German Friendship Society was instituted without any assistance from you."<sup>11</sup> Indeed, it was only after it had been instituted that a resolution was passed, on the proposal of Mr. Noel Buxton, on October 27, 1911, that you should be asked to join the Executive Committee, and although your name appears on the list of that Committee in the report for the year ending April 30, 1914, *I can find no record of your ever having attended any of the meetings of the Committee.*

"Yours truly,

"(Signed) FRANK C. LASCELLES."

Morel's own comments complete the story. "I was pressed to give my name to the Society some months after it had come into existence," he writes. "I did so because I sympathized with its objects. But its methods seemed to me impracticable. Banquets and amiable speeches could not achieve the results aimed at by the Society. So long as the nettle was not grasped, such

<sup>11</sup> The inaugural meeting of the Society was held at the Mansion House, Sir Vezey Strong, Lord Mayor of London, in the chair, on May 15, 1911.

improvement in Anglo-German relations as these well-meant efforts on both sides of the North Sea aimed at could only be of a surface kind. The whole situation was vitiated by the obscurity which shrouded our relations with France, and therefore, contingently with Tsardom. . . . Unless Parliament . . . insisted upon ascertaining whether our commitments to France . . . still survived, . . . no permanent improvement in our relations with Germany was possible, in my view. . . . But the members of the Society who discussed the position with me were disinclined to come to close quarters with what to me was the vital issue if war were to be avoided. . . . Knowing this to be their attitude, and desiring to avoid friction, I kept away from the Committee meetings : so that, apart from giving my name, *I played absolutely no part in the Society's labours whatever.*"

So much for the allegation that Morel had founded a society which he did not join for some months after its foundation, whose meetings he had never attended, and for whose methods he had displayed little or no enthusiasm. One of the most interesting books which could ever be written would be one upon Truth in Wartime.

## CHAPTER XXI

### *TRUTH AND THE WAR*

Letter to the Birkenhead Liberal Association—Condemnation of “Prussianism”—*Truth and the War*—Morel’s views on secret diplomacy—On free trade and international co-operation—On the open door and the future of the tropics—“Internationalization of commercial activities”—Treatment of native races—Neutralization of Africa—An appeal for the future—Reception of the book.

THE charge of “pro-Germanism” which has been levelled at Morel can be sufficiently disposed of by an extract from one of his very first contributions to the literature of the war, the letter which he wrote to the Executive of the Birkenhead Liberal Association, published in the Birkenhead papers on October 14, 1914, and afterwards reproduced as a pamphlet under the title of *The Outbreak of War*.<sup>1</sup>

“ I would wish to preface my remarks, . . . ” he said, “ by saying that I detest as heartily as any one can do the odious and immoral doctrines preached by the politico-militarist school of Prussia and inculcated by the philosophy of Nietzsche and Treitschke . . . ; that I condemn as vigorously as any one can do the blundering brutality of German diplomatic methods ; that I abhor as intensely as any one can do the violation of Belgian territory and the ruthless treatment meted out to the Belgian population and to certain Belgian towns by the German armies ; . . . and I am wholly in accord with the view that future conditions of peace should include heavy compensation to Belgium for the material damage inflicted upon her and for the wrongs she has suffered.”

<sup>1</sup> It afterwards formed the first chapter of *Truth and the War*.

This letter, with an appendix,<sup>2</sup> went on to explain certain of its author's views on the origins of the war, and in particular Morel's contention that our secret obligations to France had rendered any attempt, on the part of British statesmanship, either to avert the war or to preserve the neutrality of Belgium, hopeless from the first.

Speaking of his determination to help in the work of abolishing secret diplomacy, Morel concluded his letter with the following words :—

"I believe I am doing a greater service to those who suffer from its effects, and with whom I had hoped to be associated later on in the accomplishment of that purpose, by speaking now than by remaining silent, even at the price of forfeiting your and their goodwill. I cannot play the hypocrite among you.

"At any rate, that is the message which seems to come to me from those dreadful fields of senseless carnage where millions expiate the sins, the faults, and the follies of the few."

### "Truth and the War."

On October 8, 1914, Morel began to contribute a series of articles to the *Labour Leader* which, continued at intervals during the following year, were in July 1916 republished in book form, with a great deal of additional matter, under the title of *Truth and the War*.

We do not propose to discuss this book at any length here. Not only would such an attempt involve an elaborate description of numerous controversial matters which are still capable of arousing the most passionate feelings and which are by no means yet decided, but the general nature of the work, and the line of argument pursued by its author, will be gathered from previous chapters of this book.

Remembering, however, how in the years preceding the war Morel stood for the principles of Free Trade, Open

<sup>2</sup> Afterwards chapter ii. of *Truth and the War*.

Diplomacy and International Co-operation as the factors which made for the peace and progress of the world, and how he opposed the contrary policy of Tariffs, Secret Diplomacy, National Self-sufficiency and Imperialism, it will be interesting to quote some of his views on these subjects, as expressed in this book, and to note the consistency of his attitude towards them throughout the whole of his public life.

### On Secret Diplomacy.

"The virtual withdrawal of foreign affairs from national debate . . . cannot continue in a community such as ours without the gravest danger to the British Commonwealth. A democracy upon whose shoulders reposes . . . the burden of sustaining the greatest Empire the world has ever known cannot be kept in perpetual ignorance of its Government's . . . foreign policy. . . . The war has been the inevitable outcome of a universal system; . . . one of the most potential factors in that system is a statecraft which, in all lands, in this land as in others, carries on its evolutions behind the people's backs and pursues ends remote from the 'things that really matter' to the lives of the people."—*July 1915.*

"A secret and autocratic diplomacy stands between the peoples and the mutual comprehension of each other's needs. It is the greatest obstacle to the emancipation of the peoples from the shackles of militarism and war. . . . The British people have led the way in many of the reforms which have powerfully contributed to enlarge the boundaries of human freedom. If they have the will they can lead the world in the greatest of all reforms which lies open to human endeavour to-day."—*May 1915.*

### On Free Trade and International Co-operation.

"The essential problems . . . which confronted the nations in their international relationships before the war will confront them at the settlement, and after the settlement. The war will not solve them. . . . A new mechanism must be created. . . . The starting point . . . must be a firm grasp of the first principle in the life of the modern State, viz. the *common interests* which united the people of each belligerent state to its neighbours. When that principle is clearly apprehended war is seen in its true perspective—an outrage perpetrated upon the community by a restricted section thereof. . . . Commercial intercourse . . . is at once the

most visible test of those *common interests* . . . and the most powerful medium to heal the wounds and bitterness engendered by war.”—*October 1915.*

“A ‘trade war’ is, intrinsically, as great an outrage upon the peoples as a war of armaments and a war of men, of which latter it is, indeed, often the forerunner and contributor. . . . It seeks to interfere violently with the first principle of international relationship, the *common interest* between peoples. The influences which would inspire this new form of warfare upon humanity . . . are the most dangerous enemies of the peoples. . . . The exclusion of sixty-five millions of people from active commercial intercourse with their neighbours means a penalization, not of them alone, but of their neighbours too.”—*October 1915.*

“Every restriction placed upon the free circulation of produce and manufactures, even in normal times, is really an invasion of the rights of mankind in the interests of private individuals connected with some particular branch of production or manufacture. The interest of the overwhelming mass of peoples in the freedom of commercial intercourse is common and universal. It holds good in the case of the relationship between civilized (so-called) peoples and between uncivilized (so called).”—*October 1915.*

“Communities do not buy from other communities for love, but because they desire the goods those other communities produce. This element in international intercourse must survive the war as it has survived other wars, and must render nugatory any artificial efforts to restrain its influence.”—*November 1915.*

“German trade competition is not in itself an evil, because the greater the purchasing powers of the German people, the greater the volume of business our people can transact with them. The mass of the people in both countries are partners in one another’s prosperity and in one another’s misfortunes. When German competition hits particular British manufacturers, the remedy is to be sought, not in the elimination of the competitor, but in an increase in efficiency ; in maintaining a higher and more universal standard of technical knowledge, in perfecting educational systems, in revising methods, in cultivating foreign markets with greater assiduity, in creating machinery for the co-ordination and classification of effort, in converting consular functions into intelligence bureaux.”—*November 1915.*

“What is the irritant we observe everywhere at work poisoning the relationship between nations ? The Tariff. . . . The closer the intercommunication between the peoples, the greater the facilities for the exchange of commodities, the nearer the peoples

are drawn to one another by mutual needs. How singular is it to reflect that while the operation of natural forces tends more and more to the abolition of frontiers as obstacles to human intercourse and to a fusing and commingling of human interests, a restricted section of every community is permitted by the Governments to interpose artificial barriers thereto, and how grimly ironic that the very influences which ought to make for increasingly harmonious relations become charged, owing to these artificial barriers, with matter making for bitterness, jealousy and discord."—*December 1915.*

"Unhampered commercial intercourse, the right of all peoples to exchange their produce and their merchandise on a basis of mutual equality—this still remains the greatest of all reforms to be accomplished in the relationship of states."—*December 1915.*

### The Open Door and the Future of the Tropics.

With his immense knowledge of tropical Africa, Morel's views as to the future treatment of the tropical and sub-tropical dependencies of the Powers are of special interest.

"An arrangement," he says, "for the internationalization of commercial activity in the extra-European dependencies of the . . . Powers and for the neutralization of the dependencies themselves would remove three-fifths, possibly four-fifths, of the cause of potential conflicts between states. . . . And if the European Governments could be induced to go thus far, it would be comparatively easy to extend the principle to China, Persia, and other parts of Asia and Africa. . . . If agreement were possible in regard to the dependencies, there could be agreement to refrain from pursuing exclusive commercial or political advantages (which are usually a cloak to cover the former) in independent Asiatic and African territories. There is nothing Utopian or visionary in these suggestions. . . . Their execution would involve no domination of commercial activity and business enterprise on the part of the nationals of any European state. But all would compete on equal terms. Acumen, applicability to local conditions, up-to-date methods, hard work—these would be the criterions of success."—*January 1916.*

Morel made it clear that by the expression "internationalization of commercial activities" in the Depen-

dencies of the Powers he meant that "the nationals of all European states shall compete on an equal footing in the colonial dependencies of each, whether in commerce, industry, banking, mining, shipping, or any other form of legitimate enterprise."

"I mean," he said, "that a Frenchman, an Italian, a Russian, a Dutchman, a German, a Belgian, an Englishman shall carry on his business on equal terms in a French, British, German, Italian, Russian, Dutch, or Belgian dependency as the case may be. I mean that representatives of all nationalities that care to do so shall have equal rights of tendering for the construction of public works, and a share, if they desire it, in enterprises necessitating large capital outlay in the dependencies of the various Powers."<sup>3</sup>

He did not mean, of course, that the local administration should not impose taxes on European enterprises for revenue purposes, but that such taxes "should be imposed without differentiation." And he did not suggest that the *administration itself* should be internationalized,

"although the creation of International Boards for the discussion and adjustment of local difficulties, upon which commercial representatives of the natives interested would sit, might suggest itself as a feasible development in course of time."

### Treatment of Native Races.

This subject, he pointed out, had another side to it, the treatment of the native races.

"If economic rivalry between the colonizing Powers in the undeveloped or partly developed areas of the world's surface could be done away with, the rights and the wrongs of the native races would receive closer and more sympathetic consideration by the Governments."

At present the native races were callously sacrificed to rivalries between the Governments, and this affected

<sup>3</sup> *Truth and the War*, p. 262.

in the most detrimental fashion those very economic interests for which these Governments intrigued and agitated.<sup>4</sup>

"So long as the European Governments look upon these vast African and Asiatic territories as areas for the pursuit of privileges and monopolies, carried on behind closed doors, in favour of a microscopic fraction of their respective nationals, so long will these territories continue to be one of the prime causes of European unrest and European armaments, and so long will their inhabitants be sacrificed—and sacrificed not only immorally but stupidly, without the slightest advantage to the European peoples, and for the sake of purely ephemeral and exclusively selfish interests."

### The Neutralization of Africa.

Morel went on to make a plea for the "neutralization" of these dependencies, by which he meant "the removal of these oversea areas from the operations of war." This, he said, so far as a considerable part of Africa was concerned, was intended by the Berlin and Brussels Acts.<sup>5</sup> "The war has produced many weighty arguments in favour of the neutralization of African and Asiatic Dependencies."

"When passions have cooled down and a sense of perspective reasserts itself, I do not suppose the British or French Governments will feel particularly proud, or particularly easy in their minds as to ultimate effects of their action at having imported Asiatics and Africans to fight their battles upon the plains of Europe. Experience will suggest to them the doubtful wisdom of consecrating that policy.

"The neutralization of the overseas dependencies of all Powers," he continued, "offers a just and feasible way of escape from the accumulation of fresh hatreds and of fresh rivalries; and from a position which, ultimately, must in the very nature of things become impracticable to sustain."

Morel further developed this argument for "neutralization" and for the "internationalization" of commercial

<sup>4</sup> See Chapters IV, V, and XIII.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter VI.

activities"—as far as it concerned Africa—in his book *Africa and the Peace of Europe*, which appeared in the following year (1917) and which has already been discussed.<sup>6</sup> Both in this latter book and in *Truth and the War* Morel argued strongly against the proposal to exclude Germany altogether from the possession of African soil after the war.

### An Appeal for the Future.

In the final chapter of *Truth and the War* Morel, in a fine passage, which foreshadowed in many respects the great utterances of President Wilson two years later, pointed out the path which he would have the people follow.

"The goal at the end of it," he said, "is an Internationalism which, while asking no people to part with their institutions and the body of tradition which have made them one; while asking no people to surrender one iota of their pride in the land of their birth, in the social customs, the ideals and associations clinging about it . . . will demand of every people, in the interests of all peoples, some sacrifice of accepted sentiment,<sup>7</sup> some surrender of national vanity, some abandonment of a philosophy largely rooted in arrogance and largely founded upon phrases meaning very little in themselves, but which long familiarity has invested with an artificial significance. That Internationalism will be directed to ensuring the interests of all States, not merely the most powerful in size, in the number of their inhabitants, and in their financial resources.

"It will be directed to the preservation of the welfare of the peoples, not the white peoples alone, but the non-white peoples whose evolution has not yet reached the point where they can stand alone and confront, single-handed, the powerful economic and financial forces of modern civilization.

"It will be creative of the spirit by which alone the motive inspiring the relationship of nations shall respond to the real needs

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter XIII.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Lord Robert Cecil (November 5, 1918): "If it so be that a just and lasting settlement requires from any one of the combatants self-control and even renunciation, we must be ready to face it."

and aspirations of humanity, and through whose operating force the monstrous doctrine of offensive and defensive armaments shall be extirpated finally and for all time.

"That Internationalization must embrace *all* States : none must be excluded from its beneficial operations. It must be directed by a Council to whose judgment in inter-State disputes all States must give allegiance, and whose deliberations and decisions shall be public.<sup>8</sup>

"Behind its sanction every State must feel secure. Every State must feel that there is advantage to itself on entering it. And for the false conception of the word 'State,' which rulers and small privileged castes, politicians, and militarists have imposed upon the world to its undoing, must be substituted the true conception which shall enable the people at last to come into their own and to be the conscious, controlling guides of their destiny."

No admirer of "Prussianism" could have penned these lines.

### Reception of the Book.

As may be imagined, the reception given to *Truth and the War* was very different from that which Morel's former books had secured. The vast majority of journals ignored it. Of those which noticed it the greater number covered its author with abuse. Only a very few advanced periodicals — mostly Labour and Socialist organs — ventured to say a word in its praise. The book was practically unobtainable through the ordinary bookselling channels. Nevertheless it secured a large sale, especially amongst members of the Labour Party. In three months ten thousand copies were sold ; a second edition of five thousand was speedily called for, and then in the

<sup>8</sup> Cf. President Wilson at Mount Vernon (July 4, 1918) : "The establishment of an organization of peace which shall make it certain that the combined power of the free nations will check every invasion of right and serve to make peace and justice the more secure by affording a definite tribunal of opinion to which all must submit and by which every international readjustment that cannot be amicably agreed upon by the peoples directly concerned shall be sanctioned."

beginning of 1918 (whilst Morel was still in prison) a third edition was issued, with a preface by Mrs. Morel. The book bore the following inscription :—

To My Sons  
this volume is  
**DEDICATED**

in the hope that they may help to free Humanity  
from the curse of Militarism and War.

## CHAPTER XXII

### PENTONVILLE—AND AFTER

Public meetings—*Tsardom's Part in the War*—An unfortunate correspondence—Prosecution of Morel—Trial at Bow Street—Bail refused—Conduct of prosecution—The facts concerning the plea of guilty—Six months' imprisonment!—Colonel Wedgwood's protest—Lord Courtney's opinion—Days and nights in Pentonville—Romain Rolland's tribute—Release and public tributes—Joins the I.L.P.—Morel and the future.

DURING the whole of this period Morel was acting as secretary of the Union of Democratic Control, attending to the large correspondence arising from the activities of the numerous branches and affiliated bodies of that organization, contributing regularly to the *Labour Leader* and other periodicals, editing the Union's monthly journal—first issued in November 1916<sup>1</sup>—and expounding his views on the war to large and crowded meetings in Scotland, Wales and the provinces. And here it may be mentioned that on no occasion—with the single exception of a meeting which was to have been addressed by him and others at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, London, on November 29, 1915, and which was broken up by an organized body of opponents before the speakers appeared on the platform—not even at the time when the war-spirit was at its highest, did Morel ever have any of his

<sup>1</sup> At the end of 1915 Morel resigned—principally on account of his views on the war—his editorship of the *African Mail*, which he had founded twelve years previously. (See Chapter II.)

meetings seriously disturbed, or experience at them anything more formidable than an occasional interruption. Seeing that throughout these years Morel was being held up to execration as a man working in the interests of the Kaiser, and even as a paid agent of the German Government, this is a somewhat remarkable fact, and as such is worth recording.

### "Tsardom's Part in the War."

As already stated, *Truth and the War* appeared in July 1916, and *Africa and the Peace of Europe*—containing, *inter alia*, an attack upon the policy of the Empire Resources Development Committee, which, suggested Morel, was proposing to apply "to British tropical Africa . . . the identical principles which formed the juridical basis of the policy inaugurated by Leopold II on the Congo" <sup>2</sup>—in April 1917.

For some time past Morel had been urging upon his countrymen the desirability of ascertaining whether a satisfactory settlement of the war could not be reached by methods of negotiation, and in August 1917 a pamphlet of his entitled *Tsardom's Part in the War*, in which he argued that the former Russian Imperial Government was largely to blame for the outbreak, and concluded with a vigorous appeal for a conference of the belligerents to discuss methods of ending the slaughter, secured a large circulation, ten thousand copies being disposed of in five days and successive editions of ten thousand each being rapidly called for.

The publication of this pamphlet had an unfortunate personal sequel for Morel.

Whilst engaged in writing it he received one day a

<sup>2</sup> *Africa and the Peace of Europe*, p. 23. See also Chapter VIII of this book.

French pamphlet entitled "Who dragged France into the War?" (*Qui a entraîné la France dans la Guerre?*), published by the Committee for the Resumption of International Relations (*Comité pour la Reprise des Relations Internationales*) and bearing the address 33 Rue de la Grange-aux-Belles, Paris. This pamphlet, whilst asserting that Germany's responsibility for the war was a heavy one, imputed the chief blame for the outbreak to the Government of the Tsar. As this view corresponded more or less with the opinion held by Morel, he was naturally interested in the pamphlet, but as he knew nothing about the Committee which had published it, he wrote to some friends in Paris to enquire whether they could tell him anything about its status and composition. In reply he was referred to a lady then personally unknown to him, Miss Ethel Sidgwick, the daughter of a well-known Cambridge scholar and a connection by marriage of Mr. Arthur Balfour, the Foreign Secretary. This lady, he was told, frequently travelled between London and Paris and was in touch with the French Labour world. He wrote to her, and she replied as follows:—

"DEAR MR. MOREL,

"August 14, 1917.

"I have just returned and received your enquiry about the Comité pour la Reprise des Relations Internationales. I brought over the brochure among things, but I have no direct information about the Society. I have written at once, however, to the Secretary of the Ligue pour une Société des Nations and of the 'Société Documentaire' (M. Morabot's) at the Sorbonne, since the pamphlet was circulated at the meetings of the latter Society. You know, of course, that the 'Société Documentaire sur les Origines de la Guerre' is the title which protects an influential Society working on parallel lines with the U.D.C. They are bound to have information on any point as to which the U.D.C. is curious. I believe you have met my sister, so I venture to address you personally. My intimate friends, Romain Rolland and his sister, have a profound admiration for your books and international work, so that I constantly hear your name in France."

To this letter Morel, who was himself a great admirer of Rolland and his famous works *Jean Christophe* and *Above the Battle*, replied as follows, enclosing with his letter an autograph copy of his book *Africa and the Peace of Europe*<sup>3</sup> :—

“August 13, 1917.

“DEAR MISS SIDGWICK,

“Many thanks for your kind letter. I got to-day from Paris the printed circular of the Comité, so that is all right. Yes, we are in touch with the Société Documentaire, though whether our publications ever reach them I do not know. Do you know, what you told me about Romain Rolland interests me so much. He is a noble soul. Do you know which book he refers to—*Ten Years*, etc., or *Truth and the War*? I sent him both, and wondered if he ever got them. Does he get things which are sent to him? Do you know of any sure means of getting things over to him? In case you do, I send you under separate cover a copy of my last book, and should be grateful if you could forward it to him. I also send you herewith our last publication.

“With many thanks,

“Yours sincerely,

“E. D. MOREL.

“PS.—I should be very glad to know if our French friends get our stuff.”

It is quite clear that in this letter Morel definitely asked his correspondent to send a copy of his book *Africa and the Peace Settlement* to M. Romain Rolland, which request, M. Rolland being in Switzerland, was an offence under the Defence of the Realm Act. Morel, however, has

<sup>3</sup> It must be noted, in view of the subsequent proceedings, that it was not an offence at that time to transmit printed matter, whether by post or otherwise, to France or any other *allied* country. The authorities, of course, had the right to stop in the post any matter which they thought ought not to be sent, but it was not an offence for an individual to send that matter through the post or to attempt to get it through—even to “smuggle it” through—by hand. But on August 8th—five days before Morel’s letter—it was made an offence to incite any person to transmit any such matter to any *neutral* or *enemy* country. M. Romain Rolland, although a French citizen, was, as it subsequently appeared, then living in Switzerland (i.e. a neutral country), but this, Morel states, he did not know on August 13th.

stated that he had no idea that M. Rolland was in Switzerland. "It never occurred to me," he said, "to suppose that Rolland was anywhere but in France"<sup>4</sup>. If he had been in France no offence would have been committed.

Morel's letter brought the following reply:—

"August 17, 1917.

"DEAR MR. MOREL,

"Many thanks for your letter and literature. Alas! it is only too probable that none of your books or U.D.C. pamphlets have reached M. Rolland in Switzerland. At least I have never heard of his receiving one, and I hear most of his news through his sister. I will ask for definite information, though, since you give the details. She and I manage to exchange news, and she is with him at the moment at Hôtel Baron, Ville Neuve, Vaud. The only sure method is to carry things, and in this both she and I have done all we could. *Truth and the War* and Mr. Russell's reconstruction book both came to me safely in Paris, and I sent them on in her hands to Switzerland at Easter. This is the period and the book to which my letter refers. He cannot read English at all easily without his sister's help, and depends upon her for the interpretation of anything difficult, which is sad for him, as he is especially anxious to keep track of the work of the U.D.C., I.L.P., etc. *Ten Years* I myself tried to get hold of in Paris in vain. I suppose it was stopped. When I cross in October I will carry your book on Africa and anything else to interest the French fraternity that I can find. The U.D.C. paper and pamphlets I shall attempt to send to Switzerland at once, concealed in other journals. For the moment I can give you, I fear, no address in Paris that will be of any use as a halfway stage, since all these communications are either already in Switzerland or otherwise scattered. But the best chance is always to send the letter to Paris and get some one there to forward it or confine it. I offer myself gladly to you in this capacity while in residence."<sup>5</sup>

Now if Morel had previously known that M. Rolland was living in Switzerland and, knowing this, had asked

<sup>4</sup> Speech at Glasgow, June 22, 1918. Published under the title of *The Persecution of E. D. Morel* (Reformers' Book Stall, Glasgow).

<sup>5</sup> This letter, as subsequently transpired in the course of Morel's trial, was opened and photographed by the authorities, reclosed and put back into the post. (See *Rex v. Morel*, published by the Union of Democratic Control.)

his correspondent to forward books and pamphlets to that country, this letter would have been a very damaging one, and as it was it produced an exceedingly damaging effect. But Morel had not been thinking of Switzerland at all ; in the course of his brief correspondence with Miss Sidgwick he had been thinking of France and of France alone, and apparently he had not noticed that any general acceptance of his correspondent's offer would naturally be interpreted as indicating an obvious desire on his part that she should act as a forwarding agent of literature not merely to France but to Switzerland as well. For it was to Switzerland that she especially referred.

" I did not notice this at the time," said Morel.<sup>6</sup> " Indeed, I paid very little attention to the letter. I was very busy, and my correspondence was very large. Switzerland was not in my mind at all. I forgot about the letter for several days. Then in the clearing-up process which precedes a holiday, it came to light again.

" Now if I had bestowed upon it a modicum of . . . thought . . . I should have made it clear in my reply that I was not in the least interested in supplying the Swiss with *gratis* literature, and that the sole subject of our correspondence had been the *bona fides* of a French Committee and the personal feeling entertained towards myself of a distinguished French author. I should also have suggested that as Rolland was in Switzerland it was better not to risk sending him my book. If I had been a prig I might have ventured to remonstrate with my correspondent on the impropriety of attempting to send printed matter to friends in Switzerland.

" As a matter of fact, I did none of these things. I wrote a hurried acknowledgment, composed of exactly three sentences, accepting and thanking my correspondent for her offer, and enclosing four copies of my just-issued pamphlet, *Tsardom's Part in the War*, in which I had given a summary of the French Committee's publication, and which I wanted that Committee to become possessed of —using the word 'smuggle' in jocular allusion thereto."

The text of this letter (which, taken in conjunction with the other letters, made Morel technically guilty, in the opinion at least of the prosecution and of the

<sup>6</sup> Speech at Glasgow, June 22, 1918.

magistrate, of "inciting" his correspondent to commit a breach of the regulations and of "an act preparatory" to such breach) was as follows:—

"*August 21, 1917.*

"DEAR MISS SIDGWICK,

"Many thanks for yours. Perhaps you can smuggle some of these across. I should be only too grateful to make use of you in October.

"Yours sincerely,  
"E. D. MOREL."

### Arrest and Trial.

On Friday, August 31, 1917, Morel was arrested at a friend's house near Eastbourne and charged at Bow Street

"that in violation of the Defence of the Realm Act he did unlawfully solicit and incite Ethel Sidgwick to commit an act prohibited by the Defence of the Realm Regulations, to wit, to unlawfully and wilfully, without permit from the Admiralty or Army Council, convey and transmit from the United Kingdom to a neutral country (Switzerland) a pamphlet, contrary to the said regulations."

He was refused bail by the magistrate (Mr. E. W. Garrett), and was conveyed in the prison van—the unspeakable "Black Maria"—to Brixton gaol. He was brought up again the next day, when the following additional charge was preferred against him:—

"That he did, on August 21, 1917, in the Metropolitan Police District unlawfully do an act preparatory to the commission of an act contrary to or prohibited by the Defence of the Realm Regulations (Consolidated), to wit, an act preparatory to the transmission and exportation otherwise than through the post and to the conveyance from the United Kingdom to a neutral country in Europe of printed matter without a permit issued by or under the authority of the Admiralty or Army Council, contrary to Regulation 24 and Regulation 48 of the said Regulations."

After hearing the evidence offered by the prosecution, the magistrate again curtly refused bail, and Morel spent Saturday, Sunday and Monday in prison without legal

assistance, the solicitor retained for his defence, being placed in the interval "in the position of either retiring from the case or running the risk of sacrificing considerable and legitimate business interests,"<sup>7</sup> having adopted the former course. This left Morel in the unfortunate position of only being able to see his counsel, for the first and last time, for a few minutes before the final proceedings opened on the Tuesday.

"To this," said Morel,<sup>8</sup> "I attribute the fact that he entered a plea of guilty on my behalf. I was astounded, but perfectly helpless, when I heard my counsel open his defence with a plea of guilty. In saying this I make no imputation against my counsel or any one else. It may partly have been due to my own failure to appreciate the niceties of the legal procedure involved, or it may have been due to my counsel assuming that in authorizing him, as I willingly did—to give an undertaking that I would not commit the offence with which I was charged with having committed, I was in a technical sense authorizing him to plead guilty. . . . I am quite sure that he acted in what he considered my best interests, and thought himself entitled to act as he did. . . . But I repeat that it was not *my* plea. And if it had been put to me that in giving a undertaking that I would not commit an offence which I had not in any conscious sense committed at all, I was thereby necessitating a plea of guilty, nothing would have induced me to give it."

What this really amounted to was that from beginning to end Morel consistently contended that at no time had he intended any breach of the law. And this was confirmed by the speech his counsel made in entering a plea of guilty.

"He (Morel)," said counsel, "asks me to say, now that the matter has been brought to his attention, that it was not his intention to commit any such breach of the law, knowing it to be a breach of the law; and he is prepared to give an undertaking that not only will he not commit any such breach of the law, but that he will

<sup>7</sup> Speech at Glasgow, June 22, 1918. "I do not blame him in the east for retiring," added Morel.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

use any endeavour he can to see that no such breach of the law is committed under his control, and that he will not personally commit or be responsible, or assist in any way anybody else to commit, any such breach of the law in the future. . . .”

Counsel then referred to Morel’s past work and services, and concluded :—

“ Having regard to his distinguished record in the cause of humanity, and the obvious sincerity with which he holds his cause, and having regard to the undertaking which he offers through me . . . I ask you to take the view that this is a very much less serious matter than it might have appeared to you at first sight.”

### Six Months’ Imprisonment.

The appeal fell on deaf ears ; the magistrate, convicting on both charges, sentenced Morel to a term of six months’ imprisonment in the second division ; and the “ criminal ” was taken off as a common felon to Pentonville “ in the company,” as he said, “ of housebreakers, receivers of stolen goods, forgers and so on. The occupant of the cell on my right was a thief, on my left a man who had raped a child of tender years.”<sup>9</sup>

“ Before the story of his imprisonment,” wrote Sir Daniel Stevenson, ex-Lord Provost of Glasgow, “ I stated as chairman of the meeting . . . at which Mr. Morel was presented with an album containing an illuminated address and the signatures of sympathizers, that I did not think that in all the annals of our criminal jurisprudence there was any record of such a mean thing as the condemning of Mr. Morel to six months’ ‘ imprisonment as a common felon ’ for sending pamphlets to a distinguished Frenchmen in Switzerland who could have got these without danger to Mr. Morel by making a journey of ten miles to the French frontier. Even admitting that an offence was committed, it was obviously purely technical, and not such as to justify the vindictive sentence pronounced.”

• The trial and sentence of Morel evoked the greatest indignation amongst his friends, colleagues’ and admirers

<sup>9</sup> Speech at Glasgow.

—including many who did not at all approve of his views on the war—and was the subject of a passionate protest in the House of Commons by Colonel Wedgwood, D.S.O., M.P., on October 21, 1917.

"It is a real national disgrace that we have put Mr. Morel into prison," thundered the member of Newcastle-under-Lyme. . . . "That man, without any means, without any support, gradually worked up this country and Belgium and the United States of America into making a sufficient protest against the inhuman treatment of the natives of the Congo, so that in the end, after twelve years of loyalty, of devoted and unselfish work for the blacks in the Congo State, he finally broke the rule of King Leopold: . . .

"It was one of the most marvellous occurrences, I think, of the twentieth century. I do not remember any similar case in our history of one man creating such an enormous change in the government of a great number of people in this world, a man with no advantages whatever. . . .

"It was in 1911 that all the dignitaries of the churches and the members of every political party . . . came together . . . to thank E. D. Morel for his wonderful services to humanity. Where are those friends now? E. D. Morel has become unpopular. But because he is unpopular I think it would be a disgrace to our country for all those who supported him when he was triumphant to forget, like the magistrate who sent him to prison, or Bodkin who prosecuted him, the debt of gratitude which the world owes to this man. Morel was the last person who should be treated with the indignity that has been thrown upon him by the British Government. . . ."

After referring to the methods pursued by the prosecutor in the case, the opening of Morel's letters and so on, Colonel Wedgwood concluded:—

"Of all the cases supported by the most monstrous conduct, I think this is undoubtedly pre-eminent in British history. That we should punish as a crime an act of that sort supported by such evidence, and with six months' imprisonment, that we should punish so a man to whom we owe the greatest debt of gratitude, is a blot upon English traditions. . . . I am proud of my country and her traditions and history, but the imprisonment of E. D. Morel will go down to succeeding generations as one of the most serious blots on the history of this country."

In a letter to Mrs. Morel, written shortly after the trial, the late Lord Courtney of Penwith, a man not given to hasty judgments, remarked :—

“The motive of the trial was the suppression of opinion, and it became evident that the prosecution not only wanted to suppress opinion, but to lock up in silence any one who could form an opinion they would like to suppress.”<sup>10</sup>

Amongst the very large number of letters written at this time to Morel or his wife two others may be mentioned.

The first was from a brilliant young soldier, the late Lieut.-Col. Maitland Hardyman, D.S.O., M.C., himself a member of the Union of Democratic Control, who, after rising in two years from the rank of subaltern to the command of a battalion, and being wounded on several occasions, was subsequently killed in action.

Writing from France on hearing the news of Morel’s arrest, Maitland Hardyman (he was then a Major) said :—

“ 8TH SOMERSET LIGHT INFANTRY, B.E.F.

“ 3.8.17.

“ DEAR MR. MOREL,

“ Just a line to tell you how anxiously I and many of my friends are awaiting results. I think most of us feel a double pang, first for the Union, second for you personally. As you know, if I can help you, or it, at any time, I am only too delighted. Don’t let things worry you, and keep fit and unembittered. If you get a compulsory rest now, you should be all the more redoubtable a warrior later. But let us hope——

“ MAITLAND HARDYMAN.”

<sup>10</sup> A few days after the trial the author of this book was asked to call at the War Office. He did so, and whilst there was told by a high official of the Intelligence Department that the real reason for the prosecution was that Morel was trying to bring about strikes which would deprive the Army of its supply of munitions, and that, although the authorities possessed evidence to that effect, this evidence was not sufficient to ensure a conviction in a Court of Law. To any one who possesses the slightest knowledge of the world of Labour the sheer absurdity of this suggestion will be at once apparent.

The second (to Mrs. Morel) was from a Frenchwoman, and ran as follows :—

" Though I am quite unknown to you, will you allow me to express the sympathy I feel towards you in this time of great trial? My old father and mother are both in invaded France. My five brothers are fighting in the French trenches and your husband is in gaol for having tried to save them."

Some of the most eminent men and women in the country, including statesmen and authors whose names are honoured throughout the world, endeavoured to induce the Home Office to take certain steps to lighten Morel's lot whilst in Pentonville, and a few slight privileges—such as the permission to receive certain books sent into the prison for his use<sup>11</sup>—were thus secured, but that was all. Morel lost weight whilst in prison and felt the cold intensely; that, and the insufficiency of food and the confinement (he is essentially an open-air man), certainly told upon him, but it is to be hoped that he suffered no permanent injury to his health. Perhaps his imprisonment may have at least the one good result of enrolling Morel as a member of that growing band of Prison Reformers who are determined to alter drastically that penal system which has so long been a standing disgrace to British civilization.

### Romain Rolland's Tribute.

The following letter from M. Romain Rolland, addressed to the Editor of the *Revue Mensuelle* of Geneva, is perhaps

<sup>11</sup> Amongst the books read by Morel whilst in Pentonville were:—Morley's *Burke*, his *Cobden* and his *Recollections*; the *Life of Sir Charles Dilke*; Lecky's *History of the Rise of Rationalism in Europe* and his *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*; Sir G. O. Trevelyan's *War of Independence*; Carlyle's *French Revolution*; Drummond's *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*; *Lux Mundi*; the *Life of H. T. Hodgkin*; several books on Russia kindly sent by Mr. H. W. Nevinson, and a number of historical works—about sixty volumes altogether.

the most fitting comment that can be made upon what has been described as "the most miserable political prosecution attempted in any court of law for the past half-century."

"MY DEAR EDITOR AND FRIEND,

"You ask me what I think of the arrest of Mr. E. D. Morel. Personally I do not know Mr. Morel. I am told that during the war he has sent me from time to time various publications. I have never received any of them and I was not aware that he had done so. But from everything that I know about him, from his activities previous to the war, from his apostolic struggle against the crimes of civilization in Africa, from his articles (unfortunately too rare) reproduced or summarized in magazines, I regard him as a man of fine courage and splendid faith. Everywhere and at all times he has dared to serve Truth, to serve her and her alone, without thought of danger, or of the animosity he was rousing against himself, and, what is much more rare and much more difficult, he has dared to serve her without heed of his sympathies, of his friendships, or even of his country, when Truth seemed to him in disagreement with that country's actions.

"By this attitude he proves that he is of the line of Great Believers, of the great Christians of early days, of the great reformers of the centuries of struggle, of the free thinkers of the heroic ages ; of all those, in a word, who have put above and before all else their belief in Truth under whatever form (divine or secular, but for them always consecrated) she has appeared to them.

"I maintain that a man like Mr. E. D. Morel is a great citizen, even when, or rather I should say especially when, he points out to his country the errors which she seems to him to be committing. It is those who would throw a veil over those errors who are the faithless servants, whether they are incapable of understanding the facts or are mere flatterers and sycophants. Every man of courage, every man of veracity, honours his country by the mere fact of his courage and of his veracity.

"The State which claims to represent his country may strike him down as a State struck down Socrates, as States have struck down so many others to whose memory later on they have raised useless statues. But the State is not the country. It is only the steward of the country, good or bad as the case may be, but always only the steward and always fallible. It has the power, and it uses it, but since man is man that power has always made shipwreck on the rock of the soul which is free."

"ROMAIN ROLLAND."

### The Future.

Morel was released in the spring of 1918, and, after a short rest, resumed his duties as secretary of the Union of Democratic Control. He was subsequently the recipient of many letters of sympathy and condolence from men and women of all stations in life—miners and artisans, soldiers and sailors, statesmen grey in their country's service and writers and thinkers of European reputation. These letters were a source of comfort to him, assuring him, as they did, that his term of imprisonment, so far from diminishing, had, if possible, deepened the respect and regard in which he was held by those whose opinions he valued.

In March 1918 Morel became a member of the Independent Labour Party, his decision to take this step being announced at a great meeting held to welcome him at Bradford. This example has since been followed by many other former members of the Radical Party, including his friends and colleagues Arthur Ponsonby and Charles Trevelyan. As for the future—who can foresee it? It is on the knees of the Gods. The war which has devastated Europe for four and a half years is over, and millions have perished, but the heathen deities of Militarism and Secret Diplomacy which exacted the sacrifices have still to be slain. In the work of destroying these evil powers and of building up throughout the world a fairer and a finer civilization, those who know Morel, and who have followed closely his career, are confident that he will play a valiant and a distinguished part.



## INDEX

- Abercorn, the Duke of : 242  
Aberdeen, the Earl of : 102, 111, 163,  
    242  
Aborigines Protection Society, the :  
    66, 86  
*Academy*, the : 140, 198  
*Action National, L'* : 214  
*Affairs of West Africa* : 90 *et seq.*  
Africa : Resources of, 40 ; native  
    rights in, 40 *et seq.*; native  
    land tenure in, 41 *et seq.*; capi-  
    talistic exploitation in, 41, 249 ;  
    industry of natives of, 45 *et seq.* ;  
    future of, 136 *et seq.*, 160, 349 ;  
    Empire Resources Development  
    Commission and, 151 ; the War  
    and, 152 ; suggested neutraliza-  
    tion of, 153, 250 ; the Open  
    Door and, 248. *See also Con-  
    cessionaire System, the ; Congo,  
    the ; Congo Reform Association,  
    the ; Leopold II ; Morel, E. D.*  
*Africa and the Peace of Europe* : 151,  
    251, 255, 257  
*African Mail*, the : founded by Morel,  
    31, 97 ; policy of, 31 ; *Man-  
    chester Guardian* on, 32 ; Morel  
    resigns editorship of, 254 n  
Agadir Crisis, the : 185 *et seq.*  
Albert Hall, the : Congo demonstra-  
    tion at, 132  
Algeciras, the Act of : 183, 186  
Alsace-Lorraine : 227  
Angell, Norman : 206, 223  
Anglo-French Convention (1898), the :  
    38  
Anglo-German Friendship Society :  
    240 *et seq.*
- Anti-German Union, the : 241  
"Appeal to Parliament" : Congo  
    Reform Association issues, 120  
"Appeal to Press" : Congo Reform  
    Association issues, 121  
Argyll, the Duke of : 241  
Armaments : Morel on, 205  
Asquith, the Rt. Hon. H. H. : 132,  
    186, 216, 216 n, 221  
Atrocities, Congo : 65 *et seq.*, 111 ;  
    Casement, Report on, 100 ; King  
    Leopold's Commission and, 103 ;  
    Rev. J. H. Harris on, 104. *See  
    also Leopold II ; Congo, the  
    Belgian ; Morel, E. D.*  
Avebury, Lord : 241
- Baden-Powell, Sir George : 66 n  
Balfour, the Rt. Hon. A. J. : 96, 256  
Ballay, M. : 84  
*Baptist Times*, the : 156  
Barnett, Canon : 156  
Barrett, Serge : 84  
Barrington, Hon. Sir Eric : 242  
Bathurst, Charles : 133  
Beauchamp, Earl : 19, 102, 111, 117  
Bedford Modern School : Morel's  
    school-days at, 20  
Belgium : Morel commends enter-  
    prise of, 26 ; support for Morel  
    in, 53, 84, 131 ; the War and,  
    221, 222 n, 230, 245. *See also  
    Leopold II ; Congo, the Belgian ;  
    Congo Reform Association, the ;  
    Morel, E. D.*  
Beresford, Lord : 241  
Berlin, the Conference (1884) of : 60,  
    61, 81, 87

## INDEX

Birkenhead : Morel's Parliamentary candidature for, 200 *et seq.*, 221, 222, 244  
*Birkenhead News*, the : 201, 208  
 Birmingham, the Bishop of : 121  
 Blyden, Dr. : 141  
 Bobichon, Henri : 85  
 Bohn, M. : on Anglo-French Convention of 1898, 53  
 Bonner, Mrs. Bradlaugh : 86  
 Borthwick, Oliver : 165  
 Borton : Morel's speech at, 109  
 Bosworth-Smith, Professor : 102  
 Brace, William : 133  
 Brailsford, H. N. : on Congo Reform Movement, 54  
 Brassey, Lord : 102, 241  
 Brazza, Savorgnan de : 79, 80, 84  
 Brazza, the Comtesse de : 84 *n*  
 Bridge, Sir Cyprian : 241  
*British Case in French Congo*, the : 93 *et seq.*  
 British Government and Congo : 96  
 Bruce, Sir James : 242  
 Brussels, International Conference (1876) of : 59  
 Buchanan, T. R. : 95  
 Bull, Sir William : 133  
 Bunting, Sir Percy : 31, 156  
 Burns, the Rt. Hon. John : 66 *n*, 102, 111, 222  
 Buxton, Lord : 66 *n*.  
 Buxton, Noel : 242  
 Buxton, Sir T. Fowell : 86  
 Byles, Sir William : 216 *n*  
 Cadbury, W. R. : 102  
 Caillaux, Joseph M. : 190  
 Cameroons : Morel criticizes German officials in, 25; Agadir crisis and, 190  
 Campbell-Bannerman, the Rt. Hon. Sir Henry : 121  
 Cannibalism in Upper Congo : 67  
 Canterbury, the Archbishop of : 115, 121, 122, 132, 163, 241  
 Capitalism : in Africa, 41 *et seq.*, 140, 142 *et seq.*; in Morocco, 183 *et seq.*  
 Carson, Sir Edward : 242

Casement Report, the : 100  
 Cavendish, Lady Frederick : 155  
 Cecil, Lord Hugh : 216, 216 *n*  
 Cecil, Lord Robert : 251 *n*  
 Chailley, Joseph : 128, 129  
 Challaye, Felicien : 53, 128, 156, 157, 158, 213  
 Chamberlain, the Rt. Hon. Joseph : on French policy, 28  
*Chester Chronicle*, the : 201  
 Chirol, Sir Valentine : 31, 163  
 Church Congress : Morel's address at, 150  
 Churchill, the Rt. Hon. Winston : 32  
*Civilization in Congo-land* : 94  
 Claparède, René : 33 *n*, 130, 159  
 Clemenceau, G. : Morel exposes plot to murder, 29, 128  
 Clifford, Dr. John : 121, 122, 164, 202  
 Clifford of Chudleigh, Lord : 121  
 Coaling Stations : Morel on, 195  
 Cobden, Richard : 226  
 Colis, M. : 113  
*Comité pour la Reprise des Relations Internationales* : 256  
 Commission of Enquiry (into Congo) : Leopold II appoints, 102; suppression of evidence of, 103; Report of, 103; return of, 110  
 Commitments, Secret : with France, 183 *n*, 192, 193 *n*, 205, 210, 212, 213, 215, 216, 220, 245  
 Compton-Rickett, Sir Joseph : 121  
 Concessionaire System, the : in Africa, 51 *et seq.*; in Congo Free State, 64; in French Congo, 82; Casement Report and, 100; abandoned in Congo, 161; immense profits of Concessionaire Companies, 72  
 Congo, the Belgian : Morel's business relations with, 34; History of Congo Free State, 59 *et seq.*; trade statistics of, 70 *et seq.*; British Circular Note and, 96; Casement Report and, 100; Leopold II's Commission of Enquiry : 100

quiry and, 102; agitation for transference to Belgian Government of, 117, 119 *et seq.*; regime defended by Belgian Ministers, 119; the Treaty of Transfer and, 122; National Manifesto on, 127; Belgian Government's Reform Scheme and, 132; Leopoldian system abandoned in, 161; recognized as Belgian Colony, 162; future of, 160; Belgian House of Representatives and, 96, 112, 117, 132; House of Commons and, 95, 104; Foreign Office and, 112, 117, 124, 125, 127; Sir Edward Grey and, 112, 117, 123, 125, 131, 162; Lord Lansdowne and, 114, 123; Morel on, 75, 83, 86; pamphlets on, 104; Convocation on, 121. *See also* Congo Reform Association the; Leopold II; Morel, E. D.

Congo, the French: M. Felicien Challaye and, 53; *Concessionaire System* in, 79 *et seq.*, 82; disputes with British traders in, 80; Free Trade in, 82; and Moroccan question, 189, 190; Morel on, 92 *et seq.*, 129

Congo Reform Association, the: Formation of, 101; King Leopold's Commission and, 103; organizes meetings, 111; Belgian Government and, 113; progress of, 114; organizes deputation to Sir E. Grey, 117; on proposals to transfer Congo to Belgian Government, 120; issues appeal to Parliament, 120; public agitation organized by, 120 *et seq.*; issues appeal to the Press, 122; and the Treaty of Transfer, 122 *et seq.*; Third Anniversary of, 125; and National Manifesto, 127; Albert Hall Demonstration, 132; memorial to Mr. Asquith, 132; Public Testimonial to Morel, 155 *et seq.*; and Recognition of Belgian Annexation of Congo, 162; final meeting of, 163. *See*

*also* Congo, the Belgian; Leopold II; Morel, E. D.

Congo Reform Movement: H. N. Brailsford's views on, 54; public support for, 94; discussed in House of Commons, 95. *See also* Congo Reform Association, the; Leopold II; Morel, E. D.

*Congo Slave State*, the: 97

Constant, Baron d'Estournelles de: 213

*Contemporary Review*, the: 87

Convocation: on the Congo question, 121

Courtney of Penwith, Lord: 66, 202 n, 214, 264

Cousin, Albert: 84

Craig, John: 76 n

Crewe, the Marquess of: 143, 144

Cromer, the Earl of: 101, 127, 155, 157

Crossley, Sir William: 155

Curzon of Kedleston, Earl: 68

Cust, H. N.: 31

Daens, Herr: 113

*Daily Chronicle*, the: 25 n, 26, 27, 29, 122, 139

*Daily Mail*, the: 28, 116

*Daily News*, the: 155, 167, 177, 198, 212, 214, 215

Dalziel, Sir Henry: 133

Davis, Richard Harding: 74

Defence of the Realm Act, the: Morel and, 257

Delagoa Bay: Morel opposed to acquisition by Germany of, 25 n

Delcassé, M.: 180, 181, 182, 183

Denman, Lord: 102

Denton, Sir George: 31

*Dernière Heure, La*: 131

Devonshire, the Duke of: 242

Dieppe: Mobilization scenes at, 218, 219

Digby, Sir Kenelm: 142, 144

Dilke, Sir Charles: tribute to Morel by, 52; on treatment of African natives, 66, 67; attracted by Morel's articles in the *Speaker*, 75; *also* 31, 86, 91, 95, 96, 101, 102, 111, 115, 116, 133

## INDEX

- Diplomacy, Secret : Morel on, 174  
*et seq.*, 245, 246 ; and Moroccan question, 180 *et seq.* ; and France, 210 *et seq.* ; and the War, 220 *et seq.*, 231, 245
- Domaine Privé*, the : 64, 83
- Donald, Robert : 25 *n.*, 166, 202
- Downshire, the Marquis of : 242
- Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan : 132, 133, 155, 156, 159
- Duchêne, Alfred : 92
- Dueus, Ludwig : 159
- Dunn, J. Nicol : 31
- Dunraven, Lord : 242
- Durham, the Bishop of : 102, 121
- Eastbourne : Morel's early school-days at, 20 ; his arrest at, 260
- Economist*, the : 139
- Egypt : and Morocco, 181
- Elder Dempster & Co., [Messrs.] : Morel's clerkship at, 22 ; centre of West African interests, 24 ; Morel leaves employment of, 76
- Emmott, Lord : 31, 95, 96, 101, 159
- Empire Resources Development Committee : 151 *et seq.*, 255
- Evans, Rev. H. W. : 21
- Evening News*, the : 116
- Evening Standard*, the : 167
- Faber, Capt. : 191
- Fez, the French Expedition to : 185
- Fitzmaurice, Lord : 68 *n.*, 96, 104, 115
- Foreign Office, the : and the Congo, 102, 103, 112, 117, 122, 125, 134, 135 ; and Agadir, 189 ; and France, 192 *et seq.*, 210 *et seq.* ; Morel on, 174 *et seq.*, 192 *et seq.*, 204
- Fossarieu, M. de Lucy de : 21
- Fox-Bourne, H. R. : 67, 86, 95
- France : and Fashoda crisis, 28 ; strained relations with Britain, 28, 36 ; Morel praises colonial administrators of, 28 ; commercial policy in West Africa of, 36 ; Morel's visits to, 128 ; pre-war Foreign Policy of, 209 *et seq.* ; Three Years' Military Service Law in, 215 ; at outbreak of war, 218 ; and Morocco, 180 *et seq.* ; and Russia, 210 *et seq.*
- France, Anatole : 128, 129
- Freetown, Morel at : 141
- Free Trade : the Berlin Conference (1884) and, 60 ; in Congo Free State, 70 *et seq.* ; in the French Congo, 82 ; in Morocco, 190 ; and the War, 225 ; in Africa, 248 ; Morel on, 36, 50 *et seq.*, 82, 246, 247, 248
- Gardiner, A. G. : 31
- Garrett, E. W. : 260
- Geneva, Morel's speech at, 130
- Germany : Morel criticizes colonial officials of, 25 ; opposes Foreign Policy of, 25 *n.* ; on "inevitability" of war with, 176 ; on the Moroccan question and, 178 *et seq.* ; on improving British relations with, 192 *et seq.*, 196 *et seq.*, 204, 210 *et seq.* ; proposals to disintegrate, 227 ; and the War, 229 *et seq.*
- Gibson, Rev. J. Monro : 122
- Gilmour, T. L. : 165
- Girouard, Sir Percy : 150
- Gladstone, Rev. Stephen : 102
- Gladstone, W. G. C. : 202
- Glave, E. J. : 67
- Gold Coast Protectorate, the : 142, 148
- Gorst, Sir John : 96
- Gosselin, Sir Martin : 87
- Great Britain and the Congo* : 133 *et seq.*, 175
- Green, Mrs. J. R. : 31, 86, 87, 156
- Grenfell, Lord : 241
- Grey of Falloden, Lord : and the Congo, 104, 112, 115, 117, 121, 122, 123, 125, 128, 131, 162, 176 ; and Germany, 183 *n.*, 186, 187, 188, 189, 193 *n.*, 206 ; and France, 183 *n.*, 193 *n.*, 210 *n.*, 215 *n.*, 216, 220 ; and the expedition to Fez, 185 ; and the outbreak of war, 220

- Haig, Field-Marshal Lord : 241  
 Hammond, J. L. : 31  
 Hanotaux, Gabriel : 213  
 Harcourt, Viscount : 142, 144, 147  
 Hardyman, Lt.-Col. Maitland : 264  
 Harris, Rev. J. H. : 103  
 Harris, Dr. Rendel : 121  
 Harrison, Frederic : 95  
 Harvey, A. Gordon : 214  
 Hawkins, Anthony Hope : 156  
 Hazzeldine, Capt. : 79  
 Henderson, Rt. Hon. Arthur : 133  
 Hess, Jean : 84  
 Hinde, Capt. : 67  
 Hocking, Rev. Silas : 156  
 Hobhouse, L. T. : 214  
 Hodgson, Sir Frederick : 144, 145  
 Holt, John : 81, 95  
 Holtham, Sir Charles : 242  
 Horne, Emmeline de : 17, 19  
 Horne, Rev. Sylvester : 155, 156, 159  
 Horton, Dr. : 121  
 House of Commons : *see* Parliament  
 "How Wars are Made" : 177  
 Hughes, the Rt. Hon. W. M. : 225  
*Humanité, L'* : 214  
 Hut Tax Disturbances in Sierra Leone : 79  
 Illingworth, Mr. : 200  
 Independent Labour Party, the : 267  
 International Association for the Exploration of Africa, the : 60  
 International Co-operation : Morel and, 173, 251  
 Janson, M. : 96, 112  
 Jaurès, M. : 213, 214, 218  
 Johnston, Sir Harry : 31, 91, 111, 122, 139, 152, 165; on "Morelism," 43  
 Jones, Sir Alfred : 35, 74, 77 n  
 Kaiser, the : at Tangier, 182; and Agadir crisis, 190  
 Katanga Company : and Rabinek case, 88 *et seq.*  
 Kennaway, Sir John : 102, 123  
 Kennedy, Lord Justice : 242  
 King, Joseph : 216 n  
*King Leopold's Rule in Africa* : 105  
 Kinnaird, Lord : 102  
 Knowles, Sir James : 31  
*Labour Leader*, the : 245, 254  
 Lagos : 141  
 Lansdowne, the Marquess of : 81, 94, 102, 112, 114, 123  
 Lascelles, Sir Frank : 241, 242  
 Leopold II, King of the Belgians : Proposes International Conference (1876) at Brussels, 59; becomes President of International Association for the Exploration and Civilization of Africa, 60; enlists services of Sir H. M. Stanley, 60; and the Berlin Conference (1884), 60; becomes Sovereign of Congo Free State, 62; promulgates decrees restricting rights of natives to their lands, 62; levies export duties on Congo trade, 63; issues edicts of 1891 and 1892, 63; abolishes rights of natives to the land and its products, 63; introduces *Concessionaire* system into Congo, 64; as autocrat of the Congo, 73; Richard Harding Davis on, 74; interviewed in *New York Herald*, 98; power and influence of, 99; appoints Commission of Enquiry, 102; institutes campaign in America, 107; Mark Twain on, 107; issues manifesto, 114; death of, 136. *See also* Africa; Congo, the Belgian; Congo Reform Association, the; Morel, E. D.  
 Leveque, M. : and Rabinek case, 90  
 Liberalism : Morel and, 202  
 Lidgett, Rev. J. Scott : 121, 156, 165  
 Liverpool, the Bishop of : 102, 114, 121  
*Liverpool Daily Post*, the : 205, 215  
 Lloyd George, the Rt. Hon. D. : 188, 205, 214

- London, the Bishop of : 12  
 Lonsdale, Lord : 241  
 Lorand, M. : 84, 96, 112  
 Loreburn, Lord : 220 *n.*, 242  
 Lyall, Sir Alfred : 86
- Macdonald, J. Ramsay : 123, 206, 222  
 Madrid Conference, (1880) of : 180  
 Makgill, Sir George : 241, 242  
*Manchester Guardian*, the : 32, 138, 205, 214, 215, 220  
 Mansion House, Mr. Lloyd George's speech (1911) at the : 188, 214  
 Marchand Expedition : announced by Morel, 27; Morel's views on, 29  
 Massingham, H. W. : 30  
*Matin, Le* : 181 *n.*  
 Mayo, the Earl of : 165  
 McArthur, C. : 95  
 McKenna, the Rt. Hon. R. : 66 *n.*  
 Memorial Hall Meeting, breaking up of : 254  
 Methuen, Lord : 241  
 Meyer, Rev. F. B. : 121  
 Midleton, Lord : 212  
 Mille, Pierre : 31, 53, 84, 128, 129, 156, 157, 158  
 Mohammedan Chiefs' address to Morel : 142  
 Monkswell, Lord : 19, 117  
 Morel, E. D. : Birth and parentage, 15 *et seq.*; ancestral associations with Quakers, 18; death of father, 19; school-days, 20, 21; love of nature, 21; in business in Paris, 21; clerk at Liverpool, 22; studies West African subjects, 24; early Press work, 25; criticizes German colonial officials, 25; opposes German Foreign Policy, 25 *n.*; commends Belgian enterprise, 26; an authority on West Africa and France, 26; thanked by the War Office, announces Marchand expedition, 27; works to improve Franco-British relations, 28, 36;

praises French colonial administrators, 28; taunted with being "pro-French," 28 *n.*; condemns French advance on Fashoda, 29; exposes plot to murder Clemenceau, 29; H. W. Massingham's tribute, 30; founds *African Mail*, 31, 97; change of name, 32; exemption from French military service, 32; naturalization and marriage, 32; business relations with Congo, 34; relations with Sir Alfred Jones, 35; on French Colonial Tariff Policy, 36; advocates the Open Door in West Africa, 37; campaign amongst Chambers of Commerce, 37; and Anglo-French Convention (1898), 38; champion of Native Rights in Africa, 39 *et seq.*; on capitalistic exploitation in Africa, 41; on industrious character of natives, 45 *et seq.*; on *Concessionnaire* system, 51; accused of being agent of British commercialism, 52; Sir Charles Dilke's tribute, 52; tributes from M. Emil Vandervelde and M. Pierre Mille, 53; and from M. Felicien Challaye, 54; H. N. Brailsford on the Congo Reform Movement, 54; Morel on the Berlin Conference (1884), 61; studies evidence of Congo administration, 66; suspicions aroused, 66; examines trade statistics of Congo, 68; on Stokes case, 68 *n.*; discovers that Congo natives were being robbed and enslaved, 70 *et seq.*; Richard Harding Davis on, 74 *n.*; and the *Speaker* articles, 75; attracts notice of Sir Charles Dilke, 75; leaves Messrs. Elder Dempster & Co., 76; the "dismissal" legend, 76 *n.*; letter from Sir Alfred Jones, 77 *n.*; family life at

Hawarden, 78 *et seq.*; first pamphlet, 79; attacks *Concessionnaire* system in French Congo, 81 *et seq.*; *Trading Monopolies in West Africa*, 81; calls for International Conference on Africa, 83; thanked by Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, 83; French and Belgian support for, 84, 85, 113; first public speech, 86; article in *Contemporary Review*, 87; and Rabinek case, 88 *et seq.*; *Affairs of West Africa*, 90; *The British Case in French Congo*, 92 *et seq.*; accused of being French agent, 94; meeting at United Services Institute, 95; mentioned in House of Commons, 96; *The Congo Slave State*, 97; appeal to America, 98; difficulty of his task, 99; and Casement Report, 100; founds the Congo Reform Association, 101; and King Leopold's Congo Commission, 103; pamphlets on Congo question, 104; *King Leopold's Rule in Africa*, 105; visits America, 106; enlists support of Mark Twain, 107; received by President Roosevelt, 108; speech at Boston, 109; letter from Sir F. C. Selous to, 110; speech at Holborn Town Hall, 111; at British Association, 112; *Red Rubber*, 115 *et seq.*; on Foreign Office and Congo, 124; thanked by Foreign Office, 128; visits France and Switzerland, 128; received by M. Clemenceau, 128; speaks at Sorbonne, 129; at Geneva, 130; the *Spectator* on, 130; visits Belgium, 131; the Archbishop of Canterbury on, 132; *Great Britain and the Congo*, 133; Sir A. Conan Doyle on, 133; visits Nigeria, 137; special correspondent of the

*Times*, 138; *Nigeria: its Peoples and its Problems*, 138; thanked by British officials, 139; the *Outlook* on, 140; native tributes to, 141; member of West African Lands Committee, 142; lectures before Royal Society of Arts, 149; Sir Percy Girouard on, 150; Public Presentation to, 155 *et seq.*; final meeting of Congo Reform Association, 163; on success of Congo Campaign, 168; distrust of Secret Diplomacy, 174; and the shadow of impending war, 176; "How Wars are Made," 177; *Morocco in Diplomacy*, 177, 178 *et seq.*; criticizes Foreign Office policy in Morocco, 189; on embittered, feeling in Germany, 190 *et seq.*; on relieving the international situation, 191; Parliamentary Candidate for Birkenhead, 200 *et seq.*; resigns candidature, 206, 221; and outbreak of war, 218 *et seq.*; on Sir Edward Grey's speech, 220; and Union of Democratic Control, 206, 223; violent attacks on, 226, 239; unpopularity of, 229 *et seq.*; and "Origins" of the War, 229 *et seq.*; accused of "pro-Germanism," 322; motives of action of, 232, 233; and Anglo-German Friendship Society, 240 *et seq.*; *The Outbreak of the War*, 244; *Truth and the War*, 245 *et seq.*; *Africa and the Peace of Europe*, 251; addresses meetings during war, 254; advocates Peace by Negotiation, 255; *Tsardom's Part in the War*, 253; correspondence with Miss Sidgwick, 256 *et seq.*; arrest, trial and sentence of, 260 *et seq.*; Col. Wedgwood's protest, 263; Lord Courtney's opinion of trial, 264;

Romain Rolland's tribute, 265 ; joins Independent Labour Party, 267 ; and the Future, 267  
 on Free Trade, 36, 50 *et seq.*, 82, 246, 247  
 on Native Ownership in Land, 41, 43, 44, 140, 145 *et seq.*  
 on Foreign Office and Secret Diplomacy, 124, 134, 135, 169, 174, 175, 189, 194, 197, 204, 210, 211, 214, 216, 246.  
 on Treatment of Coloured Races, 150, 249  
 on Future of Africa, 151, 160, 248  
 on Effect of War on Africa, 153  
 on Neutralization of Africa, 153, 250  
 on Empire Resources Development Committee, 151  
 on War, 173  
 on Anglo-German Relations, 192, 196, 204, 210 *et seq.*  
 on Anglo-French Relations, 28, 36  
 on Naval Security, 196  
 on Armaments, 205  
 on Conscription, 215  
 on Origins of the War, 229 *et seq.*  
 on Internationalism, 251, 252  
 on Duties of a Member of Parliament, 201  
 on Liberalism, 202  
 on Social Problems, 203  
 Personal characteristics of : 21, 78, 115, 184, 201, 207, 209, 233 *n.*, 235, 236, 237, 238  
 Work of Morel as seen by Lord Aberdeen, 163 ; Henri Bobichon, 85 ; the Comtesse de Brazza, 84 *n.* ; Felicien Challaye, 54, 158 ; the Archbishop of Canterbury, 132 ; Lord Cromer, 157 ; Sir Valentine Chirol, 163 ; Dr. John Clifford, 164, 202 ; Lord Courtney, 264 ; Robert Donald, 166 ; Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, 133 ; Richard Harding Davis, 74 *n.* ; Sir Charles Dilke, 52 ; Sir Percy Girouard, 150 ;

T. L. Gilmour, 165 ; W. G. C. Gladstone, 202 ; Sir Harry Johnston, 165 ; Rev. J. Scott Lidgett, 165 ; the Earl of Mayo, 165 ; Pierre Mille, 53, 158 ; H. W. Massingham, 30 ; Sir Gilbert Parker, 164 ; Sir Edward Russell, 164 ; W. Runciman, 202 ; Romain Rolland, 265 ; Sir F. C. Selous, 110 ; G. M. Trevelyan, 202 ; Emile Vandervelde, 53, 158 ; Col. Wedgwood, 263 ; Fabian Ware, 159 ; the Bishop of Winchester, 156, 164 ; Rev. C. Wilson, 166 ; the Archbishop of York, 163 ; the *Daily News*, 167 ; the *Evening Standard*, 117, 167 ; the *Morning Post*, 166 ; the *Outlook*, 140 ; the *Spectator*, 116, 130 ; the *Times*, 91

#### Accusations against Morel :

Of being pro-British, 52, 128 *n.*  
 Of being pro-French, 28 *n.*, 94  
 Of being pro-German, 232

Morel, Mrs. : 32, 33, 158, 253, 264  
 Morel-de-Ville, Edmond : 15, 16, 17, 19

Morley of Blackburn, Viscount : 66, 102, 190, 202, 222, 228

*Morning Post*, the : 91, 94, 120, 139, 165, 166

Moroccan Question, the : 178 *et seq.*

*Morocco in Diplomacy* : 177, 178 *et seq.*, 209, 245

Morrison, Rev. W. M. : 67, 95

Murphy, Rev. J. B. : 67

Napier, Sir Walter : 144, 145

*Nation*, the : 215

National Manifesto on Congo : 127

National Psychology and War : 226 *et seq.*, 236 *et seq.*

National Service Movement, Morel and : 215

Native Rights in Africa : 39 *et seq.*, 249 *et seq.* ; and land tenure, 41 ; 145 *et seq.* ; and industrious character of na-

- tives, 45 *et seq.*; effect of King Leopold's decrees, 62 and 63; in French Congo, 93; discussed in *King Leopold's Rule in Africa*, 106; Congo Reform Association and, 120; in Gold Coast Protectorate, 142 *et seq.*; suggested Charter of, 154, 160
- Naval Construction, Russian : 213
- Naval Movements in 1912, French : 213
- Navy, British, Morel on : 196
- Nevinson, H. W. : 130, 265 *n*
- New Statesman*, the : 227
- New York Herald* : Leopold II interviewed in, 98
- Nigeria : industrial life of, 49; land tenure in, 137 *et seq.*; two schools of thought regarding, 137 *et seq.*; Morel's visit to, 137 *et seq.*
- Nigeria: its Peoples and its Problems* : 138 *et seq.*
- Norman, Sir Henry : 30
- Open Door, the : *see* Free Trade.
- Outbreak of the War*, the : 244
- Outlook*, the : 140, 174
- Pall Mall Gazette*, the : 25, 26
- Panther*, the : at Agadir, 185 *et seq.*
- Parker, Sir Gilbert : 115, 163, 164
- Parliament and Congo : 95, 97, 104, 115, 123
- Patriote, Le* : 131
- Peace Settlement, the : Union of Democratic Control and the principles of, 223 *et seq.*; President Wilson and, 225 *n*
- Peaix-Séailles, Charles : 31
- Pease, Alfred E. : 86
- Pentonville : Morel sent to, 262 *et seq.*
- Percy, Lord : 104, 111, 115
- Peuple, Le* : 117, 131
- Phillips, J. S. R. : 31, 127
- Poincaré, President : 213, 213 *n*
- Ponsonby, Arthur : 214, 223, 267
- Pressensé, Francis de : 29, 31, 185
- Rabah, Arab Chieftain : and Morel, 27
- Rabinek Case : 88 *et seq.*
- Reading, Lord : 242
- Red Rubber* : 115, 116 *et seq.*
- Revue du Mois, La* : 198
- Rickett, Sir J. Compton : 242
- Rochester, the Bishop of : 10
- Rolland, Romain : 257, 258, 259, 265
- Roosevelt, President : 108
- Ross, Professor Ronald : 31
- Rothenstein, William : 159
- Round, James : 86
- Royal Society of Arts : Morel lectures before : 149
- Runciman, Rt. Hon. W. : 202, 216
- Russell, Sir Edward : 31, 164
- Russia : 210, 211, 213, 221, 231, 235, 255, 256
- Salisbury, the Marquis of : 27, 38
- Samuel, Rt. Hon. Herbert : 95, 96, 111
- Scott, C. P. : 31
- Selous, Sir F. C. : 110
- Sembat, Marcel : 186
- Sidgwick, Miss Ethel : 256 *et seq.*
- Sierra Leone, Hut Tax Disturbances in : 79
- Smethwick, Canon : 121
- Smith, Reginald : 199 *n*
- Smith-Dorrien, Sir H. : 241
- Social Inequalities, Morel and : 203
- Sodor and Man, Bishop of : 121
- Sorbonne, the : Morel speaks at, 129
- Southwark, Bishop of : 121
- Spain and Morocco : 180 *et seq.*
- Speaker*, the : Morel's articles in, 75
- Spectator*, the : 116, 130, 198
- Stanley, Sir H. M. : 60, 67
- Star*, the : 214
- St. Asaph, Bishop of : 102
- Stead, W. T. : 31, 95, 127
- Stokes Affair, the : 67 *n*
- Strachey, J. St. Loe : 102, 127, 156
- Straight, Sir Douglas : 31
- Strathcona, Lord : 242
- Sutherland, the Duke of : 242

- Talbot, Dr. : *see* Winchester, Bishop of
- Tangier, the Kaiser at : 182
- Taylor, Sir William : 144
- Temps, Le* : 80, 181 n
- Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy* : 199
- Times*, the : 91, 120, 124, 127, 128, 129, 138, 139, 182, 183, 186, 187, 188, 197, 213, 214
- Trarieux, M. : 29
- Treatment of Coloured Races, Morel's paper on : 150
- Treaty of Transfer, the : 122, 125, 245 *et seq.*, 251, 252, 255, 257, 258
- Trevelyan, Charles : 206, 220, 222, 242, 267
- Trevelyan, George M. : 202
- Trial of E. D. Morel, the : 254 *et seq.*
- Truth* : 141
- Truth and the War* : 230, 233, 245 *et seq.*, 251, 252, 255, 258
- Tsardom's Part in the War* : 255, 259
- Twain, Mark : 107
- Tweedmouth, Lord : 102
- Union of Democratic Control : 206, 223 *et seq.*, 232, 254, 266
- United Services Institute, Meeting at : 95
- United States of America : recognizes "International Congo Association," 60; Morel's appeal to, 98; his visit to, 106
- Vandervelde, Emil : 53, 96, 112, 119, 120, 131, 132, 156, 157, 158, 161 n
- Vickers, Messrs. : 213
- Wakefield, Bishop of : 121
- War : Morel and, 36, 159, 168, 173; Cobden and, 226; National Psychology and, 226 *et seq.*, 236 *et seq.*
- War, the Great : Moroccan question and, 178 *et seq.*; alleged
- "inevitability" of, 176, 179, 191 *et seq.*, 209; Morel's efforts to avert, 176, 178 *et seq.*, 205, 209 *et seq.*; British Ultimatum to Germany, 206; outbreak of, 218 *et seq.*; Sir E. Grey's speech, 220; *Manchester Guardian* and, 220; resignations of Ministers, 222; Union of Democratic Control and, 222 *et seq.*; President Wilson's points anticipated, 224; economic boycott and, 227; "Prussianism" and, 227 *et seq.*; and Morel's unpopularity, 228, 229 *et seq.*; "Origins" of, 229 *et seq.*; and Africa, 153
- War Office, Morel thanked by the : 27
- Ward, Herbert : 98 n, 159
- Ware, Fabian : 31, 159
- Weardale, Lord : 242
- Wedgwood, Colonel : 144, 263
- West Africa : Morel attracted by, 24; French Colonial Policy in, 25; 36 *et seq.*; *See also* Africa; Concessionaire System, the; Congo, the Belgian; Congo, the French; Congo Reform Association, The; Leopold II; Morel, E. D.; Native Rights in Africa; Nigeria; Sierra Leone.
- West African Lands Committee : 142 *et seq.*; Report of, 145 *et seq.*
- Westminster, the Cardinal Archbishop of : 241
- Westminster Gazette*, the : 213
- White, Sir George : 123
- Whyte, Robert : 121, 159
- Wilberforce, Morel compared to : 166
- Wilson, Rev. C. : 166
- Wilson, President : 225, 226, 231, 251, 252 n
- Winchester, Bishop of : 155, 156, 163, 164
- York, Archbishop of : 121, 163

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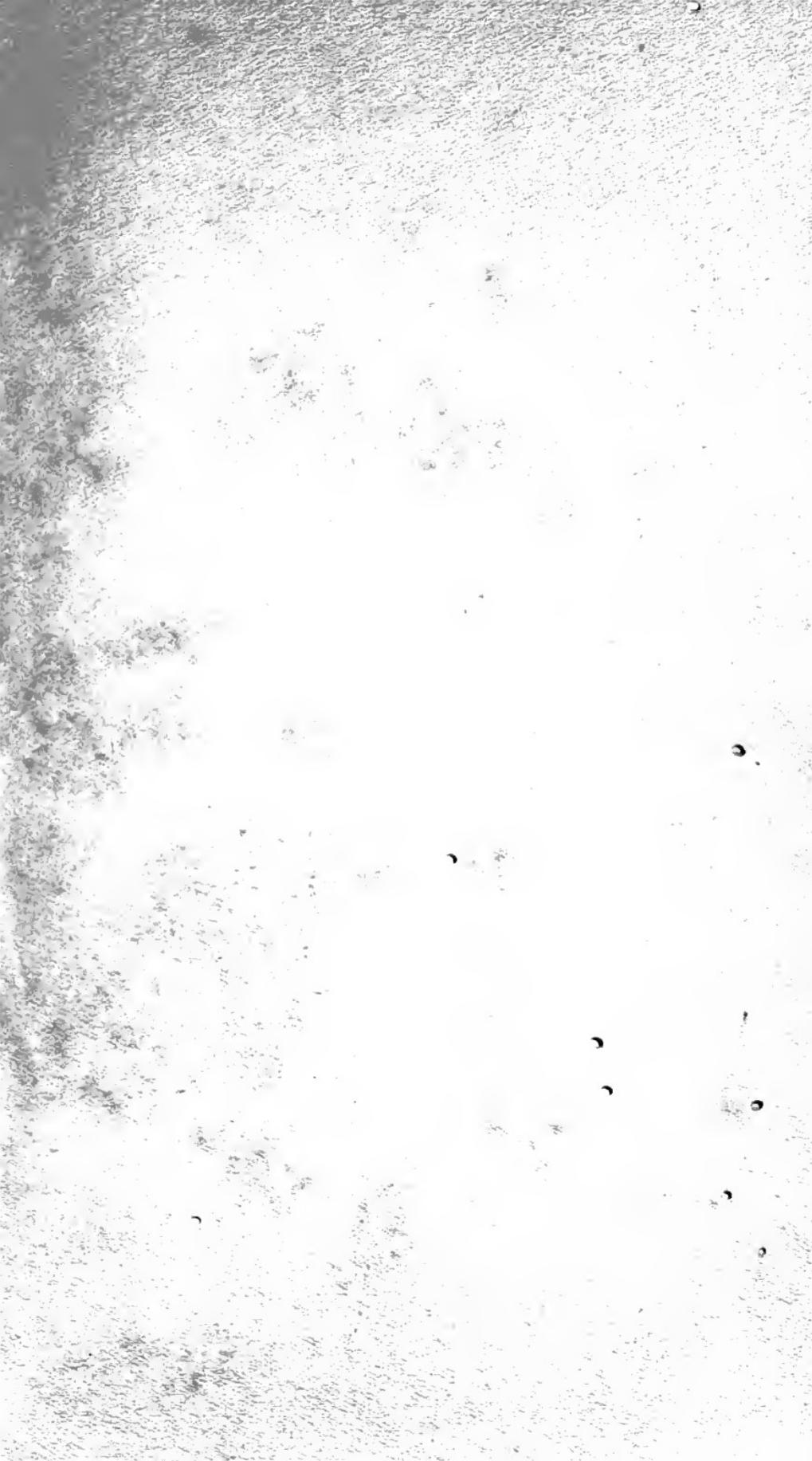
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